

**JAMES READY
FOR THE PUSH**



East's LeBron James, of the Miami Heat, goes up for a shot during the first half of the NBA basketball All-Star Game, Sunday, Feb. 20, 2011, in Los Angeles.

Associated Press
See Aruba Today Sports

Gadhafi headed to Venezuela?



Britain's Foreign Secretary William Hague, who said he had seen "some information to suggest" Gadhafi was on his way to Venezuela.

Hague spoke after a meeting of EU foreign ministers which sharply condemned Libyan authorities for their crackdown against pro-democracy protesters.

More on Page A13

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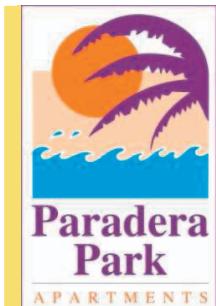
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BADGERING THE BILL



Arnold Chevalier, left, of Stoughton, Wis., shouts inside the State Capitol Monday, Feb. 21, 2011, in Madison, Wis. Opponents to Governor Scott Walker's bill to eliminate collective bargaining rights for many state workers are taking part in their seventh day of protesting.

Associated Press



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Teamsters Local 237 to bus in

New York's Teamsters support Wisconsin protestors

NEW YORK - The Wisconsin workers who have staged a week-long protest against their union-busting governor are getting some Big Apple reinforcements.

Teamsters Local 237, which represents various city workers, intends to "bus a couple hundred" members to Madison - possibly this week, Deputy Director Pete Gutierrez told The Daily News.

"This governor has awakened a sleeping giant," Gutierrez said of Gov. Scott Walker, a Republican. "We're going to bring down as many people as possible. It's an important issue and legitimate cause."

The standoff in Madison erupted last week after Walker tried to get a bill passed by the GOP-dominated state Senate that would force government workers to chip in for their pensions and health insurance - and deny them the right to bargain for better wages.

Wisconsin is the state where collective bargaining was pioneered. And while workers



said they were willing to bend on the pensions and insurance, they refused to give up their bargaining rights.

Meanwhile, all 14 Democratic state senators got out of town - paralyzing state government and denying the Republicans the quorum needed to vote on the bill.

In a sign that some of the Republicans might be wavering, GOP Sen. Dale Schultz suggested a compromise that would temporarily take away

bargaining rights to get through the state's next two-year budget and then restore them.

Walker rejected that idea. "It will never get to me because other than that one state senator, all the rest of the

Republicans are firmly behind our proposal," Walker told the media, dismissing Schultz's idea as a "short term fix."

Outside the state capitol, tens of thousands of Wisconsin public workers braved freezing winds and

temperatures barely in the 20s march again, waving signs that read "Stop the attack on Wisconsin families" and "Solidarity."

Public sector unions say Scott created a deficit last month by pushing through two massive business tax breaks. They say he's now trying to balance the books on their backs - and has not gone after the police and firefighter unions that backed him in the election.

While Madison is the focus of long-simmering union anger, similar proposals to strip public employees of collective bargaining rights also have been proposed in cash-strapped Ohio.

In Tennessee and Indiana, the GOP has also pushed bills to limit bargaining rights for teachers. □

Gadhafi goes on TV amid wave of protests

By SARAH EL DEEB

Associated Press

CAIRO - Deep rifts opened in Moammar Gadhafi's regime, with Libyan government officials at home and abroad resigning, air force pilots defecting and a bloody crackdown on protest in the capital of Tripoli, where cars and buildings were burned. Gadhafi went on state TV early Tuesday to attempt to show he was still in charge. World leaders expressed outrage Monday at the "vicious forms of repression" used against the demonstrators.

The longest serving Arab leader appeared briefly on TV to dispel rumors that he had fled. Sitting in a car in front of what appeared to be his residence and holding an umbrella out of the passenger side door, he told an interviewer that he had wanted to go to the capital's Green Square to talk to his supporters, but the rain



stopped him.

"I am here to show that I am in Tripoli and not in Venezuela. Don't believe those misleading dog stations," Gadhafi said, referring to the media reports that he had left the country. The video clip and comments lasted less than a minute — unusual for the mercurial leader, who is known for rambling speeches that often last hours. □

Pro-Gadhafi militia drove through Tripoli with loudspeakers and told people not to leave their homes, witnesses said, as security forces sought to keep the unrest that swept eastern parts of the country — leaving the second-largest city of Benghazi in protesters' control — from overwhelming the capital of 2 million people. □

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NASA:

Weather looking good for Thursday launch try

MARCIA DUNN

AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Florida (AP) — After a four-month grounding of the space shuttle fleet, NASA's countdown clocks were on the verge of ticking again Monday for Discovery's final ride into orbit.

Discovery is scheduled to blast off Thursday afternoon to the International Space Station. Forecasters put the odds of good weather at 80 percent.

When NASA tried to launch Discovery in early November with supplies and a humanoid robot for the space station, the countdown never got past the fueling phase.

A hydrogen gas leak halted everything, then a more insidious problem cropped up: cracks in the external fuel tank.

The shuttle team went into overdrive to fix all the cracks



STS-133 commander Steve Lindsey, right, straps himself into a Shuttle Training Aircraft at Kennedy Space Center's Shuttle Landing Facility in Cape Canaveral, Fla., Monday, Feb. 21, 2011. The space shuttle Discovery and her crew of six astronauts is scheduled to lift off Thursday afternoon on an 11-day mission to the international space station.

Associated Press

Spaulding told reporters Monday morning. "She

in the metal struts, located on the central portion of the tank, and to reinforce the rest of the area. The problem increased the risk of broken insulating foam, the very issue that doomed Columbia in 2003.

"Discovery has been a really remarkable vehicle for us," NASA test director Jeff

still has a few more miles to go before she sleeps, though. She's taken us on many amazing journeys throughout the years, and we expect this flight to be no different than any of those." Commander Steven Lindsey and his crew expressed gratitude for the unprecedented repairs. After arriving at Kennedy Space Center over the weekend, Lindsey called the cracking problem "probably one of the most difficult, technical challenges we've faced in recent years."

The other challenge for the crew, he noted, was the loss of the mission's lead spacewalker. Astronaut Timothy Kopra was replaced last month after he

was hurt in a bicycle crash. Stephen Bowen, an experienced spacewalker, took over. "I've got big shoes to fill," Bowen said Sunday.

Because of the delay, Discovery has spent more time awaiting liftoff in the Vehicle Assembly Building and at the pad than all but one other shuttle mission. Columbia set the record at 183 days in 1990. If Discovery soars Thursday, it will come in at 170 days.

Following this 11-day mission, Discovery will be retired and sent to a museum. Its final destination is expected to be the Smithsonian Institution. It is the oldest of the surviving space shuttles. □

In California

Church bus with teens aboard slides off road

TWIN PEAKS, Calif. — A church bus with up to 20 teens aboard slid over the side of a highway in a Southern California ski area after colliding with a county fire vehicle.

California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection spokesman Bill Peters tells the San Bernardino Sun that the accident occurred Monday afternoon near the town of Twin Peaks.

He says the bus fell about 20 feet over the side of the road after colliding with a San Bernardino County Fire Department vehicle and a power pole.

Peters tells KCAL-TV that the bus belonged to Pasadena-based Light of Love Mission Church.

The church and a California Highway Patrol spokesman did not return calls from The Associated Press.

The accident occurred in an area popular with skiers about 70 miles east of Los Angeles. □

Kill the Bill spreads like wildfire

Tennessee teachers join fight

NASHVILLE, Tennessee — A Tennessee teachers group is calling a Republican-backed state bill that would end collective bargaining an "attack" on teachers' rights.

"We don't view this as education reform. It's an attack on the rights of teachers to have a voice regarding their working conditions, which are also the learning conditions of students," said Alexei Smirnov, spokesman for the 52,000-member Tennessee Education Association, which represents 92 state school districts.

The Republican-dominated Tennessee Senate Education Committee voted last week to deny Tennessee teachers



the right to negotiate their working conditions with boards of education across the state through collective bargaining. Republicans hold the majorities in both the Senate and House. The Tennessee School Boards Association also endorses the bill. □

The Tennessee bill echoes proposals to curb public worker collective bargaining rights in other states, including Wisconsin, whose state capital has been the scene of massive worker protests over the past week.

U.S. state and local governments are struggling to balance budgets after the recession decimated their finances.

Tennessee's anti-union proposal was not a part of first-term Tennessee Republican Gov. Bill Haslam's package of legislative proposals he announced on Thursday. His education proposals include extending the number of years a teacher must serve before gaining tenure and removing the limit on the number of charter schools across the state. □

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Huckabee throws super big Mitt fit

IOWA - Mike Huckabee may be especially tempted to run in 2012 by a lingering feud between him and Mitt Romney, a severe hangover from the 2008 campaign that has created a lasting and bitter rift between the two, Republicans who know both men say.

"[Huckabee] hates Mitt, and his goal in Iowa last time was to stop him," said one prominent Republican, who's known both men for years. "If he sees an opportunity to cut Mitt off [during the nominating process], he will take it."

Huckabee and Romney were never exactly pals before the Iowa caucuses two years ago — and none of the other contenders had much affection for Romney either — but the battle for the Hawkeye State permanently turned the former Massachusetts governor and Huckabee into lasting enemies, sources say.

As Huckabee weighs whether to run again, several Republicans with ties to Huckabee say his disdain for Romney is a real factor in his decision-making about whether to mount a second campaign for the White House. □



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Next mayor faces weight of Daley's legacy Chicago, "The City that Works"



CHICAGO — They call this "The City that Works" a metropolis anchoring middle America with thriving neighborhoods, prosperous business and a skyline unmatched.

It's a city that avoided the decline that befell Rust Belt casualties Detroit and Cleveland, steered through decades of turmoil by an old-school political boss. It's a city guided into a new

century by the boss' son, a second Mayor Richard Daley who kept it vibrant through passionate promotion, a sometimes absurd focus on random details of city problems, and, yes, the family tradition of arm-twisting and spreading around the spoils. That is the vast inheritance left to the winner of Tuesday's mayoral election in Chicago, the first in more than 20 years in which Richard M. Daley won't be on the ballot as a candidate for mayor. It's a legacy that also comes paired with a legion of challenges the Daley era leaves unresolved, some which he helped foster. There is the corruption that still makes the front page:

Just this month, a top Daley lieutenant headed off to federal prison. The scars of racial segregation linger: Cement scabs on the city's West Side mark places where buildings burned in the riots that followed Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination. Daley's administration has torn through cash reserves that were supposed to last decades and the city may soon be as much as \$1 billion in the red. Students in Chicago's public high schools are as likely to drop out as they are to graduate. Daley hasn't publicly endorsed any of the candidates running for mayor, commenting only indirectly on the choice of who will take his place at City Hall. □

Univ. of Arizona starts national civility institute

TUCSON, Ariz. — Two former presidents one Republican, the other a Democrat will chair a new national institute to promote civility in political discourse in the city where U.S. Rep. Gabrielle Giffords was severely wounded in a shooting rampage that left six dead, officials announced Monday.

The National Institute for Civil Discourse will be run by the University of Arizona. Former presidents George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton will serve as its honorary co-chairmen.

"Our country needs a setting for political debate that is both frank and civil, and the National Institute for Civil Discourse can make a significant contribution toward reaching this goal," Bush said in a prepared statement.

Clinton said the institute "can elevate the tone of dialogue in our country, and in so doing, help us to keep moving toward 'a more perfect union.'" Giffords, D-Tucson, was shot in the head during a meet-and-greet Jan. 8 outside a local grocery store. A federal judge and five others were killed.



Giffords was among 13 people injured. While it is widely suspected that Jared Loughner, 22, who faces charges in the shooting, suffers from mental illness, many have focused on the bitter political climate in which the assault occurred. □



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In Chicago

Blagojevich seeks to toss wiretaps

CHICAGO — Attorneys for former Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich asked a federal judge on Monday to bar prosecutors from playing any FBI wiretap recordings to jurors at his upcoming retrial, arguing that the evidence at the very heart of the government's case is unreliable.

The motion argues that Judge James Zagel should throw out the hundreds of recordings of Blagojevich made in the days before his Dec. 9, 2008, arrest because many contain gaps where vital context needed to understand the taped conversations may be missing. The 54-year-old Blagojevich faces an April 20 retrial on 23 charges, including that he tried to sell or trade an appointment to President Barack Obama's vacated U.S. Senate seat.

Monday's motion cites the best-known secret recording of Blagojevich in which he is heard saying about the seat: "I've got this thing and it's (bleepin') golden. I'm just not giving it up for nothing."

The motion claims three gaps totaling four minutes in



that one call raise sufficient doubts, though the defense did not offer an alternative interpretation for what Blagojevich might have meant.

Federal agents secretly monitoring wiretapped phones are required to limit what they record to conversations pertinent to an investigation. That can lead them to frequently switch recording devices on and off, a process called "minimization."

Blagojevich's attorneys, however, argue that the "pattern of inconsistent and improper minimizations" in the hundreds of recordings in the investigation of the impeached governor justify

tossing them all out as evidence.

The six-page motion filed electronically overnight with the U.S. District Court in Chicago indicates that the defense also submitted 32 additional pages of sealed documents.

The judge has prohibited attorneys from revealing details of recordings that were not admitted into evidence during the first trial in August, which ended with jurors deadlocked on 23 of 24 charges, forcing a second trial. A message seeking comment left on a voicemail at the U.S. attorney's office in Chicago overnight was not immediately returned. Monday is a federal holiday and many government agencies are closed. During the first trial, prosecutors played recordings of an often angry, foul-mouthed Blagojevich talking about how he might benefit from a Senate-seat appointment. The wiretaps were at the core of the government's case. Monday's motion is the fourth filed by the defense in the last two weeks. □

At 32,256 pieces it takes 400 hours to solve

Biggest jigsaw puzzle lands in New York

NEW YORK — The biggest puzzle in the world is looking for a piece of your time. The 32,256-piece massive jigsaw puzzle, which at 17 feet by 6 feet would barely fit into some New York apartments, made its debut at the Javits Center toy fair in February. On March 1, puzzlers

will be able to purchase the six-color "Double Retrospective" featuring images by Keith Haring for \$300, hand cart included to lug the 42-pounder home. "It's kind of the Bentley in the Volkswagen group," said Thomas Koeplinger, CEO of Ravensburger, which produced the puzzle.

Large swaths of bright single colors and a massive design make the puzzle especially challenging. The company expects it to take about 400 hours to complete. Puzzlers can make it slightly easier on themselves by keeping the pieces separated into their eight bags and doing one section at a time.

It pays to be rich!

Looking for a credit card?

NEW YORK — It pays to be rich if you need a credit card. A year after sweeping credit card regulations upended the industry, banks are showering perks and rewards on big spenders with sterling credit scores. And they're socking customers with spottier histories with higher interest rates, lower credit limits and new annual fees. In some cases the riskiest customers are being dropped altogether. "When you look at the regulations, it's a net positive for consumers," says Peter Garuccio, a spokesman for the American Bankers Association. "But there have been some trade-offs."

The widening differences between how customers are treated is largely the result of new constraints on card issuers. The Credit Card Accountability, Responsibility and Disclosure Act, or the CARD Act, was signed into law with great fanfare at a time when borrowers across the country were struggling to make payments. It swept away several practices that for years had grated on cardholders. A key change is that issuers can no longer hike rates on existing balances or in the first year an account is open. The penalty charge for late payments is also capped at \$25 per violation. And monthly statements must also clearly spell out the projected interest costs of making only minimum payments.

The regulations are already transforming the cards on the market. To make up for the drop in revenue, banks are imposing new annual fees and hiking interest rates but mostly for those with the lowest credit scores. The best customers are more prized than ever. Here's how credit card offers are changing for consumers in three credit brackets: The A-list (excellent credit): A clean payment history and a healthy appetite for spending put these customers at the top of the credit pyramid. □



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Teenage refugee with Silicon Valley Dreams



OAKLAND -- Indra Bahadur Karki didn't know how to turn on a computer when he arrived in the United States in 2008, but the 17-year-old refugee isn't easily discouraged -- especially by what he doesn't yet know.

Karki dreams of working in Silicon Valley, "to be with all the high-tech people." He plans to study computer science next year at one of the 20 universities to which he has applied. In the meantime, he has tried to learn engineering, physics and C++ computer programming on his own, through books he's checked out of the library and online lectures by MIT professors.

"He's a voracious learner and reader," said his adviser Cormac Kilgallen, who teaches government, economics and world history at Oakland International High School in the Temescal neighborhood. "Whatever opportunity's there, he goes after it." Karki's Nepali-speaking parents fled Bhutan in 1992 during a political and ethnic conflict. They met in exile and married a few months later. Karki was born in a refugee camp in Eastern Nepal, and for the next 15 years, that's where he lived, played and went to school.

About three years ago, a fire destroyed most of the camp, including the family's house and all of Karki's books and stories. In an essay, he wrote, "The next day after the fire, I saw my mom crying with her brother and friends. I felt so bad at that time, I couldn't bear it. I just tried to remove myself a little far from her, focusing on my District Level Board Exam, which was three days after the fire."

The family moved a nearby forest and lived in makeshift tents. Karki wrote that heavy storms sometimes soaked them at night. "If I look back on my life, I can see lots of depressing moments that inspired me to focus on improving my present and future," he wrote.

When Karki came to East Oakland with his parents, his grandmother and his younger brother, his memories of playing soccer in the forest (with socks stuffed with plastic bags) seemed distant, almost unreal, he said. He was mugged two days in a row, on his way to and from school. His father, now a dishwasher at the Berkeley Bowl Cafe, had a hard time finding work. □

Anaheim School District

Big Brother approach to Truancy

ANAHEIM -Anaheim Union High School District really doesn't want students to skip class, so it is doing the only logical thing. It's tracking delinquent students with GPS devices.

According to The Orange County Register, the district is the first in California to take part in a six-week pilot program targeting students that frequently ditch school. The hope is that a combination of new-school Big Brother tracking technology and old-school nagging and haranguing will keep kids in the classroom and off the streets where gang susceptibility rises.

In practice, it kind of strikes us as creepy. In the program, seventh and eighth graders with four or more unexcused absences are given a handheld GPS device that looks like an old-school cell phone.

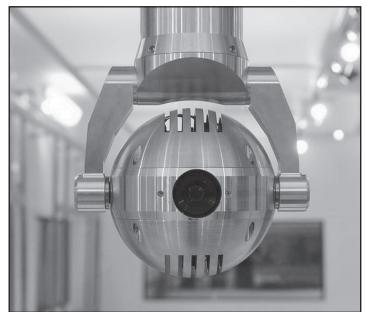
In addition to a "don't be late

to school" automated phone call, students are required to enter in a tracking code five times each day. This is required when the students leave for school, arrive at school, at lunch time, at the end of the school day and again at 8:00 p.m.

Students are also contacted by an adult "coach" three times a week to see how they are doing and talk about getting to class on time.

This isn't a mandatory program kids well, their parents have to agree to the program first. California's pilot program follows similar roll-outs in San Antonio and Baltimore.

In an interview with The OC Register, a regional director of the firm helping implement the pilot program said that the reason the devices aren't being physically attached to students is because they don't want to



criminalize the kids or have them wear any bracelet or something around their ankle that would stigmatize them." You know, because having to take a giant GPS out of your pocket to punch in a code five times a day will go totally undetected by your peers. The upside, we suppose, is that the program is voluntary at least for now. Truant students and their parents can be prosecuted and face fines of up to \$2,000, which means that if this program is successful, frequently absent kids and their families might feel the pressure to sign up. □

North Carolina

Stepmother indicted in death girl

HICKORY, N.C. — The stepmother of a 10-year-old disabled girl was indicted Monday on a charge she murdered the child, and officials released the latest gruesome detail in the case of little, freckle-faced Zahra Baker: Her head is missing.

Medical examiners said Zahra's death was caused by "undetermined homicidal violence." An autopsy was done even though authorities haven't recovered many bones, most notably the girl's skull, months after she was reported missing. Several bones showed cutting



tool marks consistent with dismemberment.

The revelation came in documents released by the state's chief medical examiner shortly after officials in western North Carolina held a news conference about the

second-degree murder charge. Authorities said Elisa Baker, who has been jailed since the weekend the girl was reported missing, desecrated Zahra's remains to cover up the slaying.

Prosecutor James Gaither Jr. said at the news conference that there was no credible evidence to suggest anyone else was involved in Zahra's slaying. Hickory Police Chief Tom Adkins called the murder charge "a milestone of holding someone accountable that members of team Zahra have been working toward since the first words spoken on that 911 call." □

LOCAL Aruba TODAY

Aruba Tourism looks to UCF school expert



ORANJESTAD - The Dick Pope Sr. Institute for Tourism Studies at the UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management, has been awarded a research project for the Minister of Tourism of Aruba.

The Institute will be preparing a strategic plan for the development of tourism in Aruba in the 21st century, aimed at maintaining and improving Aruba's competitive position in the Caribbean in this century. Additionally, the strategic plan will assist in generating sustainable growth in the tourism sector in a socially acceptable, environmentally sound and economically viable manner.

The project will employ a variety of methodologies including focus groups, competitiveness analysis, surveys, marketing intelligence reports, supply analysis, and a variety of other tools.

The Institute is expected to finish the project in November 2011.

The Dick Pope Sr. Institute for Tourism Studies was established in September 1979 in the College of Business Administration of the University of Central Florida, through a \$25,000 donation by the Orange Blossom Chapter of the Florida Public Relations Association. □

Children Color San Nicolas



Pictured is Aruba's elected Children's Queen leading the parade through the streets of San Nicolas this past Sunday afternoon. The children were dressed in every color from the rainbow, and then some. See our Carnival section on the next page. □

Children's Carnival Parade In San Nicolas

SAN NICOLAS - Aruba's youngest carnival enthusiasts take center stage as the children parade down the streets in San Nicolas dressed in colorful costumes representing various themes. The parade started last Sunday at 2:00 p.m. in downtown San Nicolas and finished late in the afternoon. Parents and fans took to the sidelines to cheer on Aruba's future as they paraded down the streets waving, dancing and singing along.

This coming Sunday, many of those from San Nicolas will join in the Oranjestad Children's Parade for even more fun and excitement. Hundreds of children enjoy the opportunity to show off their dancing skills and colorful costumes. Held in downtown Oranjestad, the event begins at 1:00 p.m.



February 27 at Eagle Beach

Aruba Aloe Beach Tennis event this Sunday

'Every body can play!!'



EAGLE BEACH - This Sunday Beach Tennis Aruba organizes the 2nd beach tennis tournament of the year. There will be 12 courts set up plenty of tents to provide shade, the famous bar with ice cold drinks for the around 180 participants and even more spectators! You don't need to play all tournaments to participate in one of them, it's a great

opportunity to compete @ your own level, exercise, have fun and meet great people!

In this tournament we have Jasper Brouwer the Fun champ of the Benelux playing! Further it's a mix of local players and tourists. In the Pro division we will see some great battles as for some of the top players this is last serious test before they travel to a World cup event

in Reunion Island(next to Madagascar..!!).

The biggest category will be the Advanced men with at least 20 teams, here almost every team has a chance to win it!

It's going to be an active Beach Tennis event this Sunday at Eagle beach!!

All levels can play from beginner to Pro!

Beach Tennis event Program: 9-11 am, Youth tournament (just show up).

11 am - 7 pm, Adult tournament (register online!) All levels can play from beginner to Pro!

Levels: Fun(beginner), Intermediate, Advanced, Pro.

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For actual standings of the tournaments of 2011, go to 'ranking' on the website



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In Yemen

President rejects demands he step down



SANA, Yemen – Yemen's embattled leader on Monday rejected demands that he step down, calling demonstrations against his regime unacceptable acts of provocation and offering to begin a dialogue with protesters.

However, protests seeking President Ali Abdullah Saleh's ouster did not let up. Tens of thousands rallied in four cities, including the capital of Sanaa. Demonstrators said

they would not leave fledgling encampments in central squares until he has left office. An opposition spokesman rebuffed Saleh's offer of dialogue and an influential group of Muslim clerics called for a national unity government that would lead the country to elections. Saleh has been in power for 32 years. At least 11 people have been killed since anti-government protests erupted earlier this month, including a youth

shot dead Monday, medical officials said. In an attempt to defuse anger over the violence, Saleh told a news conference that he has ordered troops not to fire at anti-government protesters, except in self defense.

The demonstrations in Yemen, the poorest Arab nation, are part of a wave of unrest that have swept across the Arab world in recent weeks and toppled autocratic leaders in Tunisia and Egypt.

Saleh's government was already weak before the protests, facing a southern separatist movement and disaffected tribesmen around the country.

Saleh is quietly cooperating with the U.S. in efforts to battle an al-Qaida franchise that has taken root in Yemen, but his government exercises limited control in the tribal areas beyond the capital. The U.S. gives Yemen military aid and training. □

In Bahrain

Exiled opposition leader to return

MANAMA, Bahrain – A prominent opposition figure accused by Bahrain of plotting against the state plans to return from London, an aide said Monday, in a move that could bolster protesters and force authorities into difficult choices.

Hassan Meshaima, head of a group known as Haq, is scheduled to arrive late Tuesday as the embattled monarchy tries to engage demonstrators in talks aimed at easing the week-long series of clashes and marches that have deeply divided the strategic Gulf nation.

A rights activist and supporter, Abbas Omran, confirmed Meshaima's plans, but gave no further details on his objections once he returns after eight months in self-exile. Meshaima is considered by Bahrain's officials as a potential enemy of the state. He and another London-based opposition leader is being tried in absentia among a total of 25 Shiite activists accused of plotting to overthrow Bahrain's Sunni rulers. □



In Europe

Arab revolts raise immigration fears

BRUSSELS – Europe voiced fears Monday about a new wave of illegal immigration after Libya threatened to break its cooperation on controlling the flow and more Tunisians landed on Italian shores.

With thousands fleeing from Tunisia to Italy in the past 10 days after a revolution ousted Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, European governments reacted with anger and dread after Libya warned that it could suspend its cooperation in retaliation for the EU's condemnation of a crackdown on protesters.

Heading into an EU foreign ministers meeting on the turmoil in the Arab world, German European Affairs Minister Werner Hoyer condemned the Libyan threat and said the EU would "not allow itself to be blackmailed".

Italy, an entry gate for African migrants seeking a better life in Europe, struck a controversial bilateral agreement with Tripoli last year allowing the Italian navy to intercept boat people and return them to Libya.

The European Commission has held talks with Libya for a broader cooperation deal and offered up to 50 million euros (70 million dollars) in aid last year, but no money has been disbursed so far, a commission spokesman said.

"We are extremely concerned about the evolution of the situation in North Africa," said Michele Cercone, spokesman for European home affairs commissioner Cecilia Malmstroem, who visited Libya in October to agree a cooperation agenda. Libyan officials summoned the Hungarian ambassador last week to warn that they would suspend cooperation if the 27-nation bloc continues to "encourage" protests.

Belgian Foreign Minister Steven Vanackere admitted that the threat made "many people nervous" but he dismissed it as ridiculous. However, diplomats warned that if Libyan leader Moamer Kadhafi falls, the floodgates to illegal immigration could blow wide open.

As more Tunisian migrants arrived on the Italian island of Lampedusa on Monday, Italian Foreign Minister Franco Frattini voiced fears that the Libyan unrest and other revolts across the region could increase the pressure.

"We Europeans are very concerned about the migratory flows impact, that would be one of the consequences of the turbulences," Frattini told reporters.

Warning that Europe would be "paying the price" of economic collapse in Arab nations, he called for an EU pact to help improve the lives of people in the region, a sort of "Marshall Plan", in reference to the US-led reconstruction programme for Europe after World War II.

The upheaval in its southern neighbourhood marks a new test for European solidarity regarding migration flows, following years of unresolved debate about how to handle the issue. The EU at the weekend launched a mission to help Italy cope with the Lampedusa problem, supplying 30 people, a plane and ships. □

Wisconsin Protests:

What they're fighting for?



WASHINGTON, DC – The battle over Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker's budget plan is now entering its second week, with a resolution still unclear. But as various special interest groups have descended on Madison, the fight has sprawled from the original budget controversy. Everything started when, in an effort to slash his state's budget deficit from \$3.6 billion, Walker proposed radically curtailing the benefits and pensions of public sector workers and stripping unions of collective bargaining power in order to save \$300 million over the next two years. After sustained protests at the state capitol, a moderate Republican proposal was submitted allowing for bargaining rights to be reinstated in 2013, but Democratic lawmakers have been hesitant so far. The Wisconsin budget battle has become a defacto proxy in the GOP-led effort to launch a nationwide campaign aimed at dismantling "powerful" union interests.

Simply Job Benefits Governor Walker's plan, as first proposed, would affect all public workers except for police, state troopers and firefighters. Workers would be required to "pay half of their pension costs and at least 12 percent of their health-care costs" and "would lose bargaining rights for anything other than pay," reported The Washington Post. □

More Gossip from a disillusioned Aide

WASHINGTON, DC – Last Friday, The Anchorage Daily News along with a good chunk of the political press corps in Alaska got their hands on a 500-page unpublished manuscript by Frank Bailey, a former aide to Sarah Palin who grew disillusioned with his boss. Bailey, who wrote the book with two co-authors, worked on Palin's 2006 gubernatorial campaign and stayed on as part of her "inner circle" during her 2008 vice presidential run. The book comes with all sorts of caveats it's not yet published, there's been no outside verification, and Palin has yet to comment but these are the new nuggets that Palin obsessives are digesting:

Palin may have violated Alaska's state election law by collaborating with the Republican Governor's Association on a campaign ad. "State candidates can't team up with soft-money groups such as the Republican Governor's Association, which paid for TV commercials and mailers in Alaska during the election in a purported 'independent' effort," the Anchorage Daily News' Sean Cockerham and Kyle Hopkins explain. Bailey claims he was "recruited" by Palin's husband, Todd, to take down Mike Wooten, a fire trooper who was engaged in a child custody battle with Palin's sister, his ex-wife. According to Bailey, "Todd Palin kept feeding him information on Wooten, which he passed on to troopers." Bailey also asserts that the selection of Superior Court Judge Morgan Christen as one of the top two judges considered for Supreme Court appointment by the governor was directly influenced by Christen's ruling against Wooten in the custody fight with Palin's sister. □

Can Tina Brown Be Frugal?

WASHINGTON, DC – For buzz goddess Tina Brown, reviving Newsweek will be an uphill battle. As she takes over as editor, the magazine's ad pages are down 59% from last year. The budget she's working with is a fraction of the size she had at her disposal at Vanity Fair and The New Yorker, which means no more exclusive contracts with A-list writers and no more extravagant launch parties.

"We're sort of done with that," said Brown in an interview with The New York Times. Speaking from Newsweek's new "spare, sterile" offices near Wall Street, Brown said the magazine would have to tighten its belt.

"I think the most important thing is to prove that a year from now we're thriving and still here," she said. "Maybe we'll have a little Christmas party. We have a lot of work to do."

Can Brown change her



spendthrift ways? According to the Times, Newsweek financier Sidney Harman is only giving the magazine three years to "succeed" and in that time is unwilling to lose more than \$40 million on the endeavor. As a result, the new Newsweek is a lean operation with 350 employees total including the staff at The Daily Beast.

In a rare moment of optimism, Business Insider's Henry Blodget says Brown has a real shot at succeeding. He calls

the magazine's recent bout of buyouts "an impressive start to cost-cutting" noting that more are likely to come: Sidney Harman says he thinks the combined Newsweek-Daily Beast can eventually be profitable. This seems reasonable... As long as the company keeps a laser-sharp focus on costs, combines its editorial operations to build a single online and print content engine, and finds a way to make the magazine itself useful again. □

What did it achieve?

Obama's stimulus two years later



New York – Commentators are still divided over the merits of the \$787 billion economic stimulus package much of which has yet to be spent. The \$787 billion stimulus bill signed into law on February 17, 2009, continues to inspire fierce debate. The president's American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) was intended to resuscitate a sickly economy by funding infrastructure, education, and health care projects. "We have begun the essential work of keeping the American dream alive in our time," Obama

said on the day he signed the bill. Now, two years later, the president's critics say the much-vaunted bill did nothing except inflate the deficit. Of course, not everyone agrees. What did the stimulus package achieve?

It reformed the way government spends money: One of the key victories of the stimulus, says Michael Grunwald at TIME, was to increase competition for taxpayer dollars. Programs such as education's Race to the Top have sent money only to the best-performing

programs and inspired similar competitions in energy, transportation, housing, health care and broadband. There is a "new era of rationality," and you must now do more than "check the right boxes and extend your hand to qualify for a federal check."

It proved Obama wrong: When Obama signed this bill into law, says Dan Gainor at Fox News, he said it would create jobs. But two years later, this "failed stimulus plan" has produced nothing except a record unemployment rate. This massive deception "should earn Obama a spot in the Liar's Hall of Fame."

Actually, it saved jobs in education: It's only thanks to the stimulus that the unemployment level is as low as it is, says Michele McNeil at the Baltimore Sun. A \$100 billion "shot in the arm" to our nation's schools saved and created as many as 367,524 jobs in education allowing school districts to avoid "mass layoffs." □

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Filipino gov't on the zigzag path to peace

NESBRU, Norway — Negotiators for the Philippines government and communist rebels agreed Monday on a road map for continued peace talks aimed at resolving one of Asia's longest-running conflicts by June 2012.

Ending the first round of long-stalled peace negotiations in Norway, the two sides agreed to meet again in April and every two months after that. "Tonight finds us on the zigzag path to peace," government negotiator Alexander Padilla said.

"But we have taken the first step."

Rebel negotiator Luis Jalandoni said a cease-fire declared by both sides during the weeklong talks outside the Norwegian capital "served as a confidence builder" for the first formal peace negotiations in six years.

"It has been a roller coaster ride all the way, and until a few moments ago, no one could be quite sure whether the talks would end up on a high or a low point," he said. Jalandoni added that "just and lasting peace" could only be achieved through socio-economic and political reforms in the Philippines.

Both sides said they were considering extending the cease-fire but no decisions had been made.

The rebels said Sunday they had freed a policeman and a soldier and would release a third captive partly to strengthen the negotiations. A fourth captive, army soldier Bryan Canedo was still being held and questioned after he was seized Feb. 7 in



Compostela Valley Province, the rebels said.

Battle setbacks have weakened the Maoist rebels, who reached their peak in the mid-1980s,

when their fighters numbered about 25,000. However, the military still regards the rebels as the country's most serious security threat after Muslim

rebels and al-Qaida-linked militants in the south.

Government negotiators hope that last year's election of reformist President Benigno Aquino III on the promise he would reduce poverty and improve governance will soften the rural-based insurgency, which has survived decades of military crackdown.

Peace talks stalled in 2004 after the rebels accused then President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo's government of instigating their inclusion in

U.S. and European terrorist blacklists.

A joint statement following the talks in Norway said a draft comprehensive agreement on ending hostilities "may be completed and signed by the Panels in June 2012."

Both government and rebel negotiators said the outcome of the first round of talks was uncertain until the very end because of a lack of trust between the parties.

"It will take rounds of negotiations to build that trust again," Padilla said. □

Venezuela official denies accusation

William Hague says info suggests Gadhafi headed to Venezuela



CARACAS, Venezuela — Venezuela's information minister denied suggestions that Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi was headed to the South American country.

Andres Izarra said in an e-mail sent to The Associated Press that "it's false" that Gadhafi is flying to Venezuela. He did not elaborate.

Izarra was responding to inquiries about a statement by Britain's Foreign Secretary William Hague, who said he had seen "some information to suggest" Gadhafi was on his way to Venezuela.

Hague spoke after a meeting of EU foreign ministers which sharply condemned Libyan authorities for their crackdown against pro-democracy protesters.

But EU foreign policy Chief Catherine Ashton dismissed Hague's claim, saying she knew nothing about it.

EU officials who attended the ministerial meeting also described the report as "unfounded rumors."

Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez is an ally of Gadhafi. Chavez, who shares Gadhafi's antagonistic stance toward the United States, last met with his Libyan counterpart in October during a trip to Tripoli, where officials signed economic cooperation agreements.

During his visit to Libya Chavez received an honorary degree from Tripoli's Academy of Higher Education. □



Egypt freezes Mubarak assets



CAIRO – Egypt's public prosecutor moved on to freeze the foreign assets of Hosni Mubarak, the first sign that the deposed president would be held to account by the rulers to whom he handed power 10 days ago. The prosecutor said in a statement he had asked the Foreign Ministry to use diplomatic channels to request a freeze on foreign assets and accounts held by Mubarak, his wife Suzanne and his two sons, Gamal and Alaa, together with their wives. Media reports suggested the former president's wealth may total billions of dollars and some anti-Mubarak protesters accused him of squandering the wealth of the Arab world's most populous nation, but aides insist he has done nothing wrong.

British Prime Minister David Cameron on Monday became

the first foreign leader to visit post-Mubarak Egypt and pushed for an end to emergency law, while refusing to talk to the influential Muslim Brotherhood, a growing political force. The Brotherhood said on Monday any cabinet reshuffle, designed to placate pro-democracy reformists, must purge the old guard associated with Mubarak. Egyptian online democracy activists called for a demonstration that they dubbed "Tuesday of Challenge" to demand the removal of the interim government, saying it contained too many old faces. The downfall of Mubarak in Egypt and uprisings across the region have prompted Western governments to rethink their policies of supporting autocrats, but have

also raised concerns about the rise of Islamist groups in their place. British officials said that Cameron would not speak with the Muslim Brotherhood, which is regarded with suspicion in Washington, is Egypt's biggest and best organised political grouping and says it wants a democracy with Islamic principles.

It would be a positive sign to meet other, less organised opposition groups than the Brotherhood, to highlight the fact that Islamists are not the only alternative to Mubarak, the British officials said. Cameron is at the spearhead of a diplomatic initiative to understand the new political landscape after the uprising in this key U.S. ally which has a peace treaty with Israel.

British officials said Cameron would specifically appeal to the military to lift emergency law, the cornerstone of Mubarak's iron rule and implemented after the assassination of Anwar Sadat in 1981 by Islamist officers from his army.

The complete disbandment of the current cabinet, mostly appointed by Mubarak, the lifting of emergency law and the freeing of political prisoners are key demands from reformists and activists who toppled Mubarak. □

Crocodile kills boy in outback community



DARWIN, Australia – A crocodile attacked and killed a 14-year-old boy who was swimming in a creek in an Outback Aboriginal community, police said Monday.

Police, park rangers and residents spent Monday combing the remote area for any trace of the boy, who was attacked while playing in the creek with his brothers in the Northern Territory's Milingimbi community, east of Darwin, on Sunday.

Northern Territory police Superintendent Helen Braam said officials were interviewing the young Aboriginal witnesses, who speak limited English, to get more information on what happened.

"As you can imagine, the community is quite devastated and shocked by what's happened," Braam said.

Both saltwater and freshwater crocodiles were hunted to near extinction in Australia, but have become plentiful in the tropical north since they became protected by federal law in 1971. The Northern Territory is estimated to have more than 80,000 saltwater crocodiles, which can grow up to 23 feet (seven meters) long and are the world's largest reptile. They are far more likely to attack humans than the smaller freshwater crocodiles that also live in the region. □

Pakistan intelligence says U.S. gunman is CIA

ISLAMABAD – A Pakistani intelligence official said Monday that an American in custody for killing two men was an undercover CIA contractor, setting off new friction in a crisis with the United States.

Washington voiced fear for the safety of Raymond Davis, who says he acted in self-defence. The United States has put intense pressure on Pakistan to free him, arguing that he enjoys diplomatic immunity.

But the unpopular government in Pakistan is also feeling heat from the political opposition not to cave in to US demands, with analysts even warning that the case could bring down the ruling Pakistan People's Party (PPP).

"It is beyond any shadow of a doubt that he was working for CIA," an official from Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) agency told AFP on condition of anonymity.

"He's on contract. He's not a regular CIA guy, but he's working for CIA. That's confirmed," the Pakistani official said.

US Senator Lindsey Graham also last week referred to Davis as an "agent." Davis was arrested in eastern Pakistan, the base of virulently anti-Indian groups such as Lashkar-e-Taiba which was linked to the 2008 siege of Mumbai.

Police told AFP they recovered a Glock pistol, four loaded magazines, a GPS navigation system and a small telescope from his car, after the shooting on a busy street in Lahore on January 27. A third Pakistani was struck down and killed by a US diplomatic vehicle that came to Davis's assistance. US officials denied Pakistan access to the vehicle and the occupants are widely believed to have left the country.

Washington has postponed a round of talks with Afghanistan and Pakistan, but Islamabad has said the matter is before the courts, although one compromise would be for the families to pardon Davis, in keeping with Islamic law. □

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In Morocco

Five dead in violence after demonstration

RABAT – Five bodies were found in a bank set ablaze in unrest that erupted in Morocco at the weekend after thousands of people demonstrated in several cities for change, the government said Monday.

Another 128 people, including 115 members of the security forces, were wounded in the violence that followed largely peaceful demonstrations Sunday to demand political reform, Interior Minister Taib Cherkaoui told reporters.

The minister said 120 people were arrested after the unrest in around six cities but minors among those rounded up had been returned to their families. The Morocco protests demanding political reform and limits on the powers of King Mohammed VI follow uprisings across the region, with ones in Tunisia and Egypt causing their longtime presidents to quit.

The “burned bodies of five people were recovered inside one of the bank branches set alight by rioters in the city of Al Hoceima,” Cherkaoui said. The official MAP news agency, citing witnesses, said the bodies were of “rioters who had tried to loot the bank” while others set fire to the building.



The minister blamed Sunday’s violence on rioters and ex-convicts, saying they had damaged or set fire to 33 public buildings, 24 banks, 50 businesses or private buildings and 66 vehicles.

In the northern town of Larache they had entered a customs building and made off with confiscated drugs and alcohol, he said.

Cherkaoui said the demonstrations had largely taken place in “calm and discipline” because Moroccans had the democratic right to express themselves. About 37,000 took part, he said.

Witnesses said police used tear gas against protesters in Al Hoceima after they set fire to cars and threw stones at a police station.

Communication Minister Khalid Naciri vowed that the government would speed up reforms in the wake of Sunday’s pro-reform protests. “Moroccan democracy is maturing. At a time when demonstrators in other Arab countries are met with violence, in Morocco they face institutional and political serenity,” he added.

He stressed that the message of the demonstrators “had been heard” by authorities.

“These reform demands have been part of our national agenda since King Mohammed VI came to power (in 1999). Now we need to move into higher gear,” Naciri said.

The king himself spoke of his commitment to “pursuing the realisation of structural reforms” in comments at the launch of a consultative economic council in Casablanca Monday.

He also expressed his willingness to “strengthen” the country’s accomplishments “by new reforms.”

In the capital Rabat Sunday, between 3,000 and 4,000 people took to the streets shouting: “The people want change.” They denounced corruption and called for a democratic constitution to be adopted.

In Casablanca, the North African nation’s biggest city, more than 4,000 people came out demanding: “Freedom, dignity, justice.”

The tourist hub of Marrakesh was one of the areas that saw violence Sunday, with 150-200 people attacking and looting shops including a branch of eatery McDonald’s, one witness said.

Thousands of young Moroccans have joined the

“February 20” movement on the social networking site Facebook calling for peaceful demonstrations demanding a new constitution limiting the king’s powers and more social justice.

One of the initiators of the “February 20” drive, Oussama Khelifi, said protests would continue, with daily sit-ins called for in major towns, including Rabat and Casablanca.

“The people have expressed their support for political reform. The mobilisation will continue,” he told AFP.

Moroccans are “demanding real reforms, work, more democracy, that things are not half done,” said Khadiga Mohsen Finan, a researcher at the Paris VIII University.

An Islamist deputy meanwhile resigned Monday from Morocco’s opposition Justice and Development party to protest its decision not to take part in Sunday’s nationwide protests.

“Sunday’s march was highly civilised and peaceful and our party should not have called for a boycott,” said Mustapha Ramid, whose party is represented in parliament. □

Strong earthquake hits New Zealand

WELLINGTON, New Zealand – A strong 6.3-magnitude earthquake rocked the southern New Zealand city of Christchurch on Tuesday, seriously injuring people and damaging buildings throughout the city. Live video footage showed parts of buildings collapsed into the streets, which were strewn with bricks and shattered concrete. Sidewalks and roads were cracked and split, and hundreds of dazed, screaming and crying residents wandered through the streets as sirens blared throughout the city.

Christchurch Mayor Bob Parker said he was on the top floor of the city council building when the quake hit, throwing him across the room.

“I got down onto the street and there were scenes of great confusion, a lot of very upset people,” he said. “I know of people in our building who are injured and I’ve had some reports of serious injuries throughout the city.”

Radio New Zealand reported that a church near the city center collapsed. The station also said staffers in its Christchurch newsroom had to cling to their desks during the shaking, with large filing cabinets toppling over.

Some cars apparently parked on the street were buried under rubble.

“What I can see from where I am in the central city is that there are significant amounts of additional damage,” Parker said. □

Japan hopes pandas from China will help warm ties

TOKYO – Japan hopes that two giant pandas from China will help warm bilateral ties strained over a territorial spat and give Tokyo’s economy a jolt, too.

The two 5-year-old pandas arrived at Tokyo’s Ueno Zoo late Monday. They’ll be the zoo’s first since the 2008 death of its beloved giant panda Ling Ling.

The Ueno area has been gearing up for the pandas’ arrival for weeks, with banners carrying panda cartoons and shops selling novelty goods. Japanese media crews were camped at the zoo.

“The pandas are finally coming to town,” said beaming Masahiro Kayano, a jewelry store owner in Ueno.

“We are so excited.” The pair female Xiannu and male Bili arrived at their new home around midnight



Monday, completing nearly 30 hours of journey from the panda preserve in southwestern China’s Sichuan province. Despite late hours and the night chill, dozens of panda fans and neighbors gathered at the zoo’s entrance to welcome them, calling their names and cheering as

a truck carrying their cages went past them, showered by flashlights.

The scene of their arrival earlier at Tokyo’s Narita airport, with an aircraft landing on the runway and their cages taken out of the plane, was broadcast live on Japan’s public broadcaster NHK.

Ueno Zoo Director Teruyuki Komiya said both new residents arrived in good health, though the male panda seemed a bit nervous.

“I’m so relieved that they arrived safely,” Komiya said in a news conference in the early hours of Tuesday. “Bili seemed a bit nervous and whining, but Xiannu is very steady.” □

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Flames blank Habs in Heritage Classic

Hockey fans cheer the Montreal Canadiens and the Calgary Flames during the first period of the NHL Heritage Classic hockey game in Calgary, Alberta, Sunday, Feb. 20, 2011.

NHL Roundup

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Associated Press



SPORTS

Aruba TODAY

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SEEKING PARDON

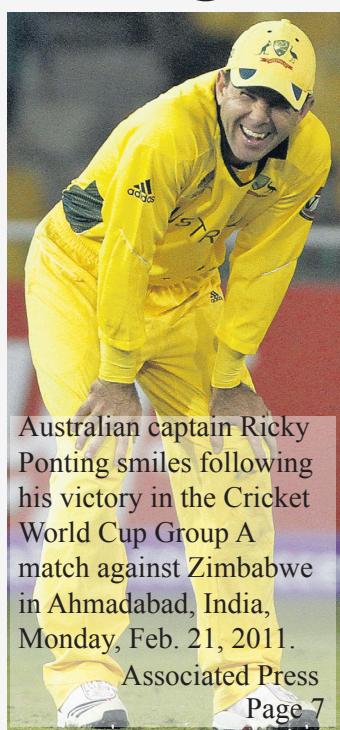


This May 18, 1931, file photo shows boxer Jack Johnson, the first black world heavyweight champion, striking a pose.

Associated Press

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PONTING PILOT



Australian captain Ricky Ponting smiles following his victory in the Cricket World Cup Group A match against Zimbabwe in Ahmadabad, India, Monday, Feb. 21, 2011.

Associated Press

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HEATING UP



James ready to make playoff push

East's LeBron James, of the Miami Heat, drives down to the basket while being guarded by West's Kobe Bryant, of the Los Angeles Lakers, during the second half of the NBA basketball All-Star Game on Sunday, Feb. 20, 2011, in Los Angeles.

Associated Press

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Wozniacki officially reclaims No. 1 ranking

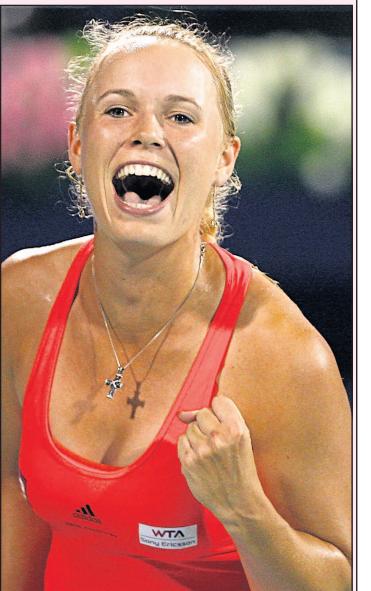
DOHA, Qatar (AP) — Caroline Wozniacki officially reclaimed the No. 1 ranking in women's tennis on Monday, only one week after surrendering it to Kim Clijsters.

The 20-year-old Dane won her first singles title of 2011 on Sunday, beating Svetlana Kuznetsova 6-1, 6-3 in the Dubai Championships final.

"Well, of course it's nice to have it," Wozniacki said of the ranking. "It's nice to see your name and being in the top spot and that's what I practice for, but every time I go into a tournament, the most important thing for me is to do my best, try to win the tournament I entered. If I play well, then the rankings will come automatically."

Although she has been one of the most consistent players on the WTA Tour, Wozniacki has been criticized for being No. 1 despite never having won a Grand Slam singles title.

"I would like to win any of the Grand Slams. Of course, again, I go into a tournament and I want to win it. I do my best," Wozniacki said. "I'm



Carolina Wozniacki of Denmark reacts after winning the match against Russia's Svetlana Kuznetsova during the final of the Emirates Dubai WTA Tennis Championships in Dubai, United Arab Emirates Sunday, Feb. 20, 2011.

Associated Press

just trying to keep improving, and hopefully my time will come. "We have to see at the end of the year if I've won one or not. If I have, it's fantastic. If not, it's not a disaster. It's OK. I still have hopefully a lot of years ahead of me." □

Japan to get Breeders' Cup Challenge race

LEXINGTON, Kentucky (AP) — The Breeders' Cup Challenge series is adding a race in Japan this summer, with an automatic starting position in the World Championships at stake. The Breeders' Cup and the Japan Racing Association announced Sunday that the Takarazuka Kinen, a Group 1 stakes race run on June 26 at Hanshin Racecourse, is joining the international Breeders' Cup Challenge. This year's Breeders' Cup will be held Nov. 4-5 at Churchill Downs in Louisville, Ky. The winner of the 52nd running of the Takarazuka Kinen, which will be run at 1 3/8 miles on the turf for 3-year-olds and up, will automatically qualify for



In this Nov. 6, 2010, file photo, John Velazquez rides Uncle Mo to victory during the Juvenile race at the Breeders' Cup horse races at Churchill Downs in Louisville, Ky. The Kentucky Derby is still about three months away, but there's little argument right now that Uncle Mo is the horse to beat on the first Saturday in May. Uncle Mo is training toward his 3-year-old debut next month in the Tampa Bay Derby.

Associated Press

a berth in the \$3 million Emirates Airline Breeders' Cup Turf, which will be run at 1 1/2 miles on the turf.

Bahrain F1 Grand Prix off



The distinctive tower of the Bahrain International Circuit is seen in Sakhir, Bahrain, where the 2011 Formula 1 season was to open on March 13, is seen Monday, Feb. 21, 2011.

Associated Press

ROB HARRIS
AP Sports Writer
LONDON (AP) — Formula One organizers called off the season-opening

Bahrain Grand Prix on Monday because of the anti-government protests sweeping the tiny Gulf kingdom. "We felt it was important for the

purses of \$26 million. The Breeders' Cup will cover the \$90,000 entry fee and give a \$20,000 travel allowance to the winner of the Takarazuka Kinen to start in the Breeders' Cup Turf. Also, this year's Breeders' Cup Turf winner will be given an automatic berth in the Japan Cup on Nov. 27 at Tokyo Racecourse, and will be eligible for up to a \$1 million bonus in addition to its prize money based upon a top-three finish in the Japan Cup. Along with Japan, Breeders' Cup Challenge races this year will be held in the United States, Canada, Hong Kong, England, Ireland, France, Argentina and Australia. □

country to focus on immediate issues of national interest and leave the hosting of Bahrain's Formula One race to a later date," Bahrain's crown prince said in a statement. Eight people have been killed since the unrest began last week and demonstrators planned to use the March 13 race to highlight demands for the ruling monarchy to give up its near-absolute control over key policies and positions. Much of the protesters' anger had centered on Crown Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, who owns the rights to the grand prix. He notified F1 boss Bernie Ecclestone by telephone on Monday that the event would not go ahead. "After the events of the past week, our nation's priority is on overcoming tragedy, healing divisions and rediscovering the fabric that draws this country together; reminding the world of the very best that Bahrain is capable of as a nation once again united," the crown prince said in a statement. No new date has been set for the race, which is the kingdom's biggest international sports event. The Bahrain GP has been on the F1 calendar every year since 2004. "It is sad that Bahrain has had to withdraw from the race, we wish the whole nation well as they begin to heal their country," Ecclestone said. "The hospitality and warmth of the people of Bahrain is a hallmark of the race there, as anyone who has been at a Bahrain Grand Prix will testify. We look forward to being back in Bahrain soon." The Bahrain GP could be rescheduled later in the season, with speculation it could take place after the Abu Dhabi race on Nov. 13 if the season-finale in Brazil is moved from Nov. 27 into December. Last week, Ecclestone said he hoped the unrest "all blows away" and the race could still go ahead. "It is clear that to race in Bahrain at this time would be inappropriate given the current circumstances," Williams F1 team chairman Adam Parr said. □

Flames beat Canadiens 4-0 in outdoor game

CALGARY, Alberta (AP) — Rene Bourque scored two goals and Miikka Kiprusoff stopped 39 shots as the Calgary Flames beat the Montreal Canadiens 4-0 Sunday in the Heritage Classic outdoors game at McMahon Stadium.

NHL Roundup

Anton Babchuk had a short-handed goal and Alex Tanguay also scored for the Flames, who became just the second home team in the NHL's six outdoors games to get a win. Kiprusoff got his fourth shutout of the season. The win moved the Flames past four teams into a tie with Nashville for fifth place in the Western Conference, as 10 points separate third place and 12th. Calgary has earned at least a point in 18 of its last 20 games. Carey Price finished with 33 saves for Montreal, which dropped to 1-2-2 in its last five games.

Blackhawks 3, Penguins 2, SO

At Chicago, Patrick Kane scored the only goal in the shootout to lift Chicago over

Pittsburgh.

Patrick Sharp and Bryan Bickell scored in regulation for the Blackhawks in their third straight game without coach Joel Quenneville, who is recovering from gastrointestinal bleeding caused by an ulcer.

Matt Cooke had a short-handed score for Pittsburgh and Brett Sterling fired in a rebound from the edge of the crease with 3:18 left in the third period to tie it at 2-2.

Red Wings 2, Wild 1, SO

At St. Paul, Minnesota, Todd Bertuzzi scored the clinching goal in the shootout to lift Detroit to its fifth straight win. After Pavel Datsyuk flipped a first-round shot over Niklas Backstrom's stick, Howard denied Minnesota's Pierre-Marc Bouchard and Matt Cullen to set up Bertuzzi's winner.

Wild goalie Jimmy Howard, who finished with 25 saves, has given up only one shootout goal in 14 attempts this season.

Minnesota's Martin Havlat answered Niklas Lidstrom's goal early in the third period

by scoring on a breakaway to tie the game.



Montreal Canadiens' Hal Gill, left, looks on as Calgary Flames' Alex Tanguay, center, celebrates his goal with Mark Giordano, left, and Brendan Morrison during the third period of the NHL Heritage Classic in Calgary, Alberta, Sunday, Feb. 20, 2011. The Calgary Flames beat the Montreal Canadiens 4-0.

Associated Press

NFL, union exit from 4th day of mediation

By HOWARD FENDRICH

AP Pro Football Writer

WASHINGTON — Pittsburgh Steelers quarterback Charlie Batch emerged with a smile and a positive outlook Monday after attending a fourth consecutive day of federally mediated negotiations between the NFL and the players' union.

"Things are going well right now," said Batch, a member of the NFL Players Association executive committee. "We'll see how things progress over the next couple days."

He didn't discuss any details. NFLPA executive director DeMaurice Smith left at 6 p.m., about seven hours after Monday's session began. NFL executives departed minutes after Smith. None would comment on the negotiations; Smith deflected questions by joking about the wintry weather, including snow forecast for Monday night. After months of infrequent — and sometimes contentious

— bargaining, the league and union have been communicating face-to-face for a total of more than 25 hours since Friday. □

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late show: 1:00	

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netter in the third period. Despite outplaying Philadelphia in the first, the Rangers had only a tie to show for it. The tide turned in the second.

Capitals 2, Sabres 1

At Buffalo, New York, Marcus Johansson tipped in Mathieu Perreault's shot midway through the third period to lift slumping Washington past Buffalo.

Perreault finished with a goal and assist in helping the Capitals win for only the second time in their past six

games. Alex Ovechkin had an assist on the decisive goal, giving him his first point in his past five trips to Buffalo, dating to a two-goal outing on March 5, 2008.

Jason Pominville scored for the Sabres, who dropped their third straight and are winless in their past four home games. In other NHL games it was Detroit 2, Minnesota 1, SO; Chicago 3, Pittsburgh 2, SO; Washington 2, Buffalo 1; Philadelphia 4, N.Y. Rangers 2; and Calgary 4, Montreal 0. □

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West's Blake Griffin, left, of the Los Angeles Clippers, and Kobe Bryant, of the Los Angeles Lakers, laugh during the second half of the NBA basketball All-Star Game on Sunday, Feb. 20, 2011, in Los Angeles.

In West's NBA All-Star win

Kobe wins 4th MVP

BRIAN MAHONEY

AP Basketball Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Kobe Bryant scored 37 points and equaled a record with his fourth All-Star game Most Valuable Player award, leading the Western Conference to a 148-143 victory over the East on Sunday.

"I feel like we have a sense of responsibility and we are voted in for what we do during the season, which is play hard," Bryant said. "And we come here, that's what the

fans want to see. They want to see us go at it and see us compete and that's what I try to do and that's what I try to tell my teammates to do."

Returning to the game he dominates after a one-year absence, Bryant added 14 rebounds in a spectacular performance in front of the usual celebrity-filled crowd that turns out to see his Lakers at Staples Center.

"It feels great, being at home here and playing in front of the home crowd," Bryant said after receiving the MVP trophy. "This will be my last All-Star game in front of these home fans, so it feels good to do it."

Kevin Durant chipped in 34 points, scoring five straight after the East cut a 17-point deficit after three quarters to two points with 2:34 to play. The NBA scoring leader added the clinching free throws after the East got back within three in the final seconds.

LeBron James powered the East rally, finishing with 29 points, 12 rebounds and 10 assists to join Michael Jordan as the only players with a triple-double in the All-Star game.

Amare Stoudemire also scored 29, but Miami's Dwyane Wade, the MVP of the East's win last year, had to leave with an ankle injury after scoring 14.

Plenty of Hollywood A-listers were sitting courtside, but Bryant's popularity here can rival most of them. This week, he became the first athlete to have his handprints and footprints put in concrete outside Hollywood's famed Grauman's Chinese Theater.

He told fans to "enjoy the show" before the tip off, and as always he delivered a good one.

Always more about focus than fun, Bryant had 21 points by halftime, putting him halfway to Wilt Chamberlain's record from 1962, the year of his 100-point game.

"You could tell he started out from the start, he wanted to get the MVP," Stoudemire said. "He was not passing the ball, at all. But that's Kobe."

And when the East made it close in the third quarter, Bryant dunked over a chasing James who was going for the block, then nailed a 3-pointer to make it 90-79.

"He was unbelievable tonight," James said. "You definitely saw his motor was going tonight."

Carmelo Anthony scored eight points in his possible goodbye to the West team. The weekend was dominated by talk of a potential trade to New York or New Jersey, and the Denver Nuggets forward appeared alternately entertained and annoyed by the constant questions.

"At times, it can be tough, but it's fun at the same time," he said while walking on the magenta carpet before the game. "During this weekend I'm still having fun."

While hearing some of the usual "MVP! MVP!" chants he's usually serenaded with at Staples Center, Bryant tied Bob Pettit's record for All-Star game honors. He was scoreless for the final 6:48, but Lakers teammate Pau Gasol had a big basket to help the West hold on.

Gasol scored 17 points, helping the West hold on against an East team featuring a combined seven players from Boston and Miami, considered two of the biggest threats to end the Lakers' reign. The exhibition game had a bit of a finals feel with the presence of a record-tying four players from the rival Celtics.

Paul Pierce — who grew up in nearby Inglewood — and Kevin Garnett received the heaviest boos during the starting lineups.

Ray Allen and Rajon Rondo were also here from the group that lost Game 7 on this floor last June and would love another chance to come take the title back.

East coach Doc Rivers sent his four players out together midway through the first quarter to loud boos that usually provide the soundtrack of June in Los Angeles. □



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- Organized and strong ability to prioritize and multi-task
- Computer and PMS knowledge recommended (Opera and Concierge Assistant a plus)
- English necessary, Spanish a plus

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All-Star break over, James ready for playoff push

TIM REYNOLDS,
AP Sports Writer

MIAMI (AP) — LeBron James acknowledges there is a point in the NBA schedule where regular-season games start carrying a little bit more significance.

It's now.

He's not shy about saying that, either. Though they all count the same in the marathon 82-game schedule, games after the All-Star break just seem to carry more weight in James' mind. The reason is simple: With every passing game, he's that much closer to returning to the playoffs — and resuming his still-unfulfilled quest of winning an NBA championship.

Miami opens its post-All-Star schedule Tuesday at home against Sacramento. This time of year is often called the second half, but it's more accurate to depict it as the final third, since the Heat have just 26 games left before the opening postseason round begins.

James has been saying for weeks that he starts getting into playoff mode after the break.

The Heat can't wait to see what that really means.

"We're still learning each other," James said. "Our record is really good and we're excited about our record, but we understand, we've still got to continue to get better."

In other words, follow his lead.

He's the league's two-time reigning MVP, a title that

he was widely expected to relinquish this season in exchange of pursuing, well, another title. With Dwyane Wade and Chris Bosh alongside him in Miami, many people — James included — thought he would be unlikely to put up MVP numbers for a third straight year.

But James' stats have been better each month. Scoring is up. Rebounding is up. Assists are up.

And the strange part is, he's doing it while the productivity for Wade and Bosh has increased as well, making Miami look more and more like a championship contender as the year rolls along.

"Here's what's interesting. As his personal numbers have increased the last few weeks, what's important is our level of team execution and trust and confidence has also increased," Heat coach Erik Spoelstra said.

"As long as those two things can work in concert, we're all for it. We're talking about an MVP, a two-time MVP, who is so dynamic and versatile with his skills he can impact the game in so many ways."

Just look at Sunday's All-Star Game as proof of that.

The Eastern Conference may have lost to the West All-Stars, but James still managed a triple-double — 29 points, 12 rebounds and 10 assists.

The only other player in All-Star history to do that?

Michael Jordan.

James comes out of the All-Star break ranked third in

the league in scoring (26.1), 13th in assists (7.3, despite spending almost as much time lately at power forward than point guard), and tops the NBA charts in two categories that measure efficiency — plus-minus (plus 8.3 per game) and the combination of points, assists and rebounds (40.8).

"I didn't want to think about me being MVP this year," James said.

"I wanted to think about bringing the Miami Heat an MVP player on the court. ... I've always said over my career team success comes individual accolades — and I guess my name is back in the race."

Miami's 9-8 start to the season is long forgotten. The Heat are 32-7 since.

And Miami's best basketball may be still to come.

"I think he's more comfortable in the system, more comfortable playing with the guys, he knows where everybody's going to be," Heat center and longtime James teammate Zydrunas Ilgauskas said. "We use a lot more of our playbook now. We have a lot more plays in. We just had to have some games under our belt as individuals and as a team for us to be comfortable."

Wade says that if he got an MVP vote now, he'd pick James.

It's tough to argue.

Still, remember what James



East's LeBron James, of the Miami Heat, drives down to the basket while being guarded by West's Kobe Bryant, of the Los Angeles Lakers, during the second half of the NBA basketball All-Star Game on Sunday, Feb. 20, 2011, in Los Angeles.

Associated Press

said Jan. 1 about how he would handicap the MVP chances for either himself or Wade, who also hasn't seen any major dips in his stats despite having two other No. 1 options playing alongside him now. "When we decided to come together, our MVP chances went out the window," James said on New Year's night.

Care to reconsider, anyone? □

"Look at his numbers. He's putting up great numbers on a good team," Wade said in Los Angeles at All-Star weekend. "It shows even more to average 26, 7, and 7 and you have another guy (himself) averaging 25 and you got another guy (Bosh) averaging almost 19. And you still are a very valuable player to this team. So there's no question he can." □

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Roddick withdraws from Delray Beach

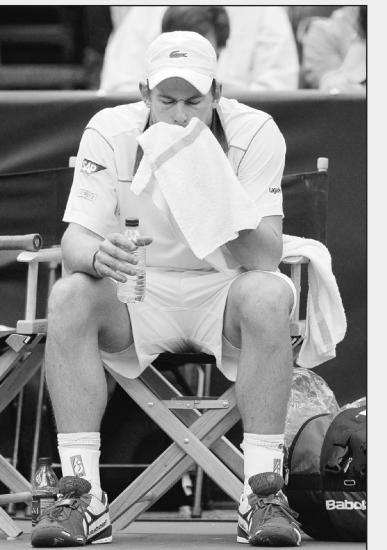
BOCA RATON, Florida (AP) — Top-seeded Andy Roddick has withdrawn from this week's Delray Beach Tennis Championships.

The eighth-ranked American complained of feeling ill before winning the Memphis title over Milos Raonic 7-6, 6-7, 7-5 on Sunday. It was his 30th career title.

The 28-year-old Roddick made his professional debut at the Delray Beach tournament in 2000. He hasn't played in the event since 2003.

Roddick's best result at Delray Beach was reaching the final in 2002.

Roddick is scheduled to lead the U.S. Davis Cup team into the first round against Chile in Santiago next week. □



Andy Roddick coughs as he rests between games while playing Milos Raonic, of Canada, in the championship match of the Regions Morgan Keegan Championships tennis tournament Sunday, Feb. 20, 2011, in Memphis, Tenn.

Associated Press

Safarova, Petrova advance in Qatar

DOHA, Qatar (AP) — Lucie Safarova of the Czech Republic upset seventh-seeded Agnieszka Radwanska of Poland 7-6 (3), 6-3 in the opening round of the Qatar Open on Monday. Safarova used her strong baseline play to constantly trouble Radwanska on her serve, creating 13 break points and converting four of them.

Marion Bartoli of France, the 2007 Wimbledon finalist, beat Alisa Kleybanova of Russia 7-5, 6-2, while Nadia Petrova of Russia ousted Roberta Vinci of Italy 6-4, 6-2.

Bartoli double-faulted five times in the first set and was broken once before gradually taking control against Kleybanova. In the second set, she lost just five points on her serve.

"It was a windy day and that's why I took time to settle down," Bartoli said. "I had a bad start but managed to find my rhythm in the second set."

Top-ranked Caroline Wozniacki of Denmark has a first-round bye, as do the next three seeded players: Vera Zvonareva of Russia, Francesca Schiavone of Italy and Li Na of China. □

Chilean miner to run Tokyo Marathon

TOKYO (AP) — Chilean miner Edison Pena plans to run the Tokyo Marathon, his second such race since he was among the 33 men rescued in October.

The 35-year-old Pena jogged through tunnels while trapped underground. Word of his dedication inspired New York City Marathon organizers to invite him to watch the race. Instead, he asked to run it. Pena ran and walked on bad knees to finish in 5 hours, 40 minutes on Nov. 7.

In New York for the marathon were executives from Remo System, a Japanese maker of shoe inserts and other training products. They worked with Fuji TV to get him into Sunday's race in Tokyo.

Pena has been training more than 6 miles a day. Remo plans to donate 2,000 pairs of shoes to needy Chileans in Pena's honor. □

Backers making another run at pardon for boxer



This undated file shows boxer Jack Johnson, who was born in Galveston, Texas. Johnson became the first African American to win the world champion heavyweight boxing title. He had approximately 113 bouts, only six losses and was inducted into the Boxing Hall of Fame in 1954. Lawmakers are going another round in their fight to get a posthumous presidential pardon for Johnson, who was imprisoned nearly a century ago because of his romantic ties with a white woman.

Associated Press

FREDERIC J. FROMMER

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Lawmakers are going another round in their fight to get a posthumous presidential pardon for the world's first black heavyweight champion, who was imprisoned nearly a century ago because of his romantic ties with a white woman.

New York Rep. Peter King and Arizona Sen. John McCain, both Republicans, plan to reintroduce a congressional resolution urging a pardon for boxer Jack Johnson.

Another supporter, Democratic congressman Charles Rangel, said he will talk to President Barack Obama's new chief of staff, William Daley, and Attorney General Eric Holder

about the cause.

"It's an injustice that shouldn't fall through the cracks, and it looks like that's exactly what happened here," Rangel said. Johnson became the first black heavyweight champion a century before Obama was elected the nation's first black president.

The boxer's flamboyant lifestyle and his relationships

with white women inflamed white sensibilities. Racial resentment boiled over after he defeated a white boxer in the "Fight of the Century" 100 years ago last summer. Three years later, Johnson was convicted of violating the Mann Act, which made it illegal to transport women across state lines for immoral purposes.

One of Johnson's great-great nieces, Linda Haywood of Chicago, is writing to Obama about the case.

"I think having a letter from a family member will help put a face on our plea," Haywood said. "Many people didn't realize he had nieces and nephews. For years, the rest of my family was so ashamed, no one ever spoke of him because of the stigma attached to him being in prison."

King said he was surprised that Obama didn't act during the last session of Congress, when the House and Senate passed the resolution. But the congressman said he's still optimistic.

"With last year's elections, there seems to be a clear intent by the president to try to be more bipartisan," King said.

"Everything is there to correct an historic wrong and also, in a small but significant way, help to bring the country together now."

The White House declined to discuss the request for Johnson, citing a policy of not commenting on how pardon candidates are chosen.

Obama, a former constitutional law professor who once taught a class on racism and the law, has not spoken publicly of the Johnson effort, but the Justice Department has come out against it.

In a letter to King and McCain at the end of 2009, the Justice Department attorney who advises on pardons argued that resources for such requests are best used for those still alive "who can truly benefit" from them.

That notwithstanding, he noted, Obama certainly could pardon whomever he wishes. Last year, Obama pardoned nine people convicted of crimes including possessing drugs, counterfeiting and even mutilating coins. None was well-known. Johnson won the world championship on Dec. 26, 1908. □

Dutch players aim to prove they deserve World Cup place

STUART CONDIE

AP Sports Writer

NAGPUR, India

(AP) — Netherlands captain Peter Borren wants his players to prove their country deserves a place at future World Cups.

The International Cricket Council will reduce the 14-team tournament to 10 nations for 2015, which will almost certainly prevent the Netherlands, Ireland, Kenya, Canada and other second-tier sides from appearing again on 50-over cricket's biggest stage.

But Borren says questions over whether smaller nations deserve their places at the competition cannot be answered until at least after Tuesday's opening match against England.

"We're hoping by pulling off the sort of results that have happened in the past, we can answer that question on the field," Borren said. "We've got to focus on this competition and obviously that starts tomorrow."

"We need to prove ourselves out on the field in a way that we can make our own statement with regard to what happens in the future to the 50-over World Cup."

The Dutch beat England at Lord's in the 2009 World Twenty20, but a repeat in the longer, more demanding one-day game could be more elusive — not least with Borren unable to bowl because of an abdominal injury.

"Everything's different about Twenty20 to 50-over cricket," Borren said. "We've played a lot of 50-over cricket over the last couple of years, although not as much as maybe we would like against full member sides."



Netherlands' captain Peter Borren bats during a nets session in Nagpur, India, Sunday, Feb. 20, 2011. Netherlands will play England in Nagpur in their first World Cup match on Tuesday, Feb. 22.

Associated Press

"It's a different challenge, more of a challenge, different conditions, completely different competition and a different day, but (the 2009 victory) is something we can take some confidence from." Canada and Kenya have already taken heavy defeats to test nations at this World Cup and the Netherlands could face another if England bats first and gets off to a flying start.

England has pushed Kevin Pietersen up to opener in an effort to get the most from his explosive talent, but that could backfire if he holes out early. "It's a change from England and for Pietersen himself," Borren said.

"We're well aware what he's capable of and aware he's not done that job all that much, so hopefully that gives us an opportunity."

"We're concentrating mainly on what we're doing. But if we can create pressure through disciplined bowling and fielding well, I expect that we will create chances and it's all about taking those." □



Australian players, from left to right, Jason Krejza, Brad Haddin and captain Ricky Ponting celebrate after claiming the wicket of Zimbabwe's captain Elton Chigumbura, right, in their opening game of cricket's World Cup at Ahmadabad, India, Monday, Feb. 21, 2011.

Associated Press

Australia makes winning start to world title defense

TREVOR HUGGINS

Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — Australia opened its World Cup defense with a workmanlike victory over Zimbabwe on Monday, as the tournament form book stayed resolutely on the side of the game's major nations.

A day after Sri Lanka and New Zealand crushed Canada and Kenya respectively, Ricky Ponting's men cruised to a 91-run triumph in Ahmadabad that looked more like a practice match than a game at the highest level of one-day cricket.

Australia's batsmen made a leisurely start to the Group A game, only reaching the 50 mark in the 15th over and 100 in the 26th, before gradually stepping up the pace to finish with a flourish on 262-6.

Opener Shane Watson underlined his excellent form with 79 and Michael Clarke hit a respectable 58 not out, but 28 was hardly an innings for Ponting to celebrate his record-breaking 40th World Cup match. Brad Haddin's ponderous 29 in 66 balls was nothing if not measured.

"We could have got a few more runs, but overall it was a pretty good start," Ponting

said.

Zimbabwe's bowlers can certainly take credit for keeping the winners of the last three World Cups in check, with Ray Price, Prosper Utseya and Graeme Cremer all holding the run-rate below five for each of their 10 overs. However, the known shortcomings of the Zimbabwe batting order were all ruthlessly exposed, and well before the run-chase ended, with the African side finishing 171 all out in the 47th over.

Mitchell Johnson spearheaded a sometimes brutal pace attack, claiming 4-19 and was ably supported by Shaun Tait's 2-34, while spinner Jason Krejza chipped in with 2-28.

Zimbabwe made a solid enough start with Brendan Taylor, Charles Coventry and Tatenda Taibu helping their side reach 40-1 before the match definitively swung Australia's way in little more than two overs.

The wickets of Taibu, Taylor and Craig Ervine all fell to the pace attack for only four runs and Zimbabwe's hopes of repeating its shock 1983 World Cup victory over the Aussies were dashed. Cremer

finished up as his side's top scorer with 37 in another lopsided affair.

After Kenya, Canada and Zimbabwe, the Netherlands should be the next lamb to the World Cup slaughter when it takes on England in Group B on Tuesday in Nagpur, India. 'Should' is a dangerous word, though, for England in limited overs cricket, as the Dutch know only too well having famously defeated the home side in a World Twenty20 game at Lord's in 2009.

Netherlands captain Peter Borren said his men will draw confidence from that victory when they walk out to face Andrew Strauss's side, who have arrived fresh from a 6-1 ODI series drubbing in Australia.

"I expect that we will create chances and it's all about taking those," Borren said.

For Strauss, the ODI debacle in Australia — sustained without a number of key players — is all history and the future is all about having a World Cup to remember.

"We are up for it. We are excited," he said on the eve of the Group B game. "There is a good vibe and buzz about everything out here at the moment." □

More companies covering transgender surgery



In this Feb. 11, 2011 photo, Gina Duncan, a transgender employee, sits at her Wells Fargo office in Maitland, Fla. More and more large corporations, including Coca-Cola, Campbell Soup and Walt Disney, are covering surgery for transgender employees as part of their health plans.

Associated Press

LISA LEFF

Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — When Gina Duncan decided to undergo the medical treatment that would make her a woman, she had plenty to fear. The reactions of her children, her professional colleagues and friends. How her body would respond to hours on the operating table. If, at the end of it, she would look female enough so strangers wouldn't gawk.

What the Orlando mortgage banker didn't have to be anxious about was how she would pay for two of her surgeries. Her employer of 10 years, Wells Fargo, included breast augmentation and genital reconstruction as coverable expenses under its employee health plan. Duncan was told the San Francisco-based bank already had had 16 other employees transition to new genders and assigned a benefits specialist to walk her through the process. "They had a template in place, and it was surprisingly supporting and mentally encouraging," said Duncan, 55, who four years later still works for Wells Fargo. "So much of what I'd heard involved people who ended up losing their job, losing their family, losing their friends, becoming destitute." With little fanfare, more and more large

corporations, including Coca-Cola, Campbell Soup and Walt Disney, have expanded their insurance coverage to meet the needs of transgender workers. The trend follows a concerted push by transgender rights advocates to get employers and insurers to see sex reassignment the way the American Medical Association does — as a medically indicated rather than an optional procedure.

"We understand people simply get appendicitis, and it is something our community deals with through insurance," said Andre Wilson, who counsels companies on transgender issues as a senior consultant with San Francisco-based Jamison Green & Associates. "That's what we need to understand about transsexualism."

Not everybody will be diagnosed with Gender Identity Disorder, and in fact, few people will be. But the people who are diagnosed with it really need treatment."

Among the corporations providing transgender-inclusive health benefits are some leading Wall Street and Main Street brands.

American Express, Kraft Foods, AT&T, Yahoo!, Eastman Kodak, Sears, Morgan Stanley, Price Waterhouse, General Motors and State Farm are among

85 large businesses and law firms that cover the cost of at least one surgery, according to a 2010 survey by the Human Rights Campaign, the nation's largest gay rights group.

The number is expected to spike this year, when HRC adds availability of surgery-inclusive medical benefits for transgender employees or transgender dependents to the criteria in its annual corporate diversity report card.

To maintain the coveted 100 percent rating when the next Corporate Equality Index is published in the fall, companies will have to offer at least one insurance plan that covers at least \$75,000 worth of surgery and other treatments recommended by a patient's doctor. "A lot of people are pretty surprised that alongside the cosmetic and experimental treatments that are excluded from mainstream plans, you can see very broad exclusions related to transgender care," said Deena Fidas, associate director of HRC's Workplace Project.

"In raising the bar...we are addressing the root cause of the problem."

Stephanie Battaglino, an assistant vice president at New York Life Insurance, has been working with a senior executive at her company to add transgender health benefits to the employee insurance plan. □

On Sunday, Seif al-Islam

the first half of this year. At the time, the amount to be raised had not been finalized.

Bloomberg, citing three people with knowledge of the plan, said the company was preparing an IPO of about \$500 million and that Morgan Stanley had also been hired.

Morgan Stanley and Oak Pacific could not immediately be reached for comment. □



Oil jumps to above \$90 as Libya protests spread

PABLO GORONDI

Associated Press

Oil prices jumped by over \$4 a barrel on Monday amid investor concerns that violent protests spreading in Libya could disrupt crude supplies from the OPEC nation and affect other oil-rich countries in the region.

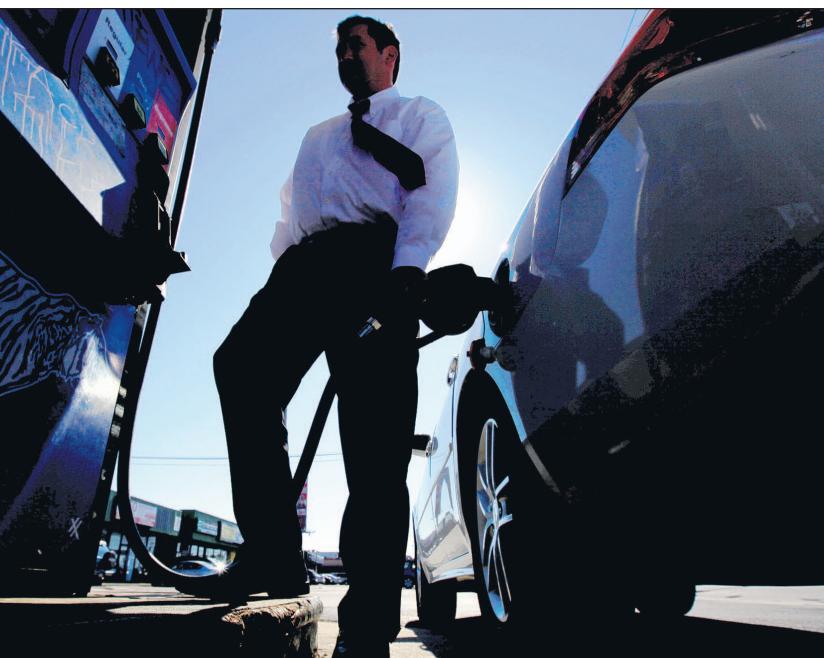
By late afternoon in Europe, benchmark crude for March delivery was up \$4.03 to \$90.23 a barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. The contract fell 16 cents to settle at \$86.20 on Friday.

U.S. markets, including Nymex floor trading, were closed Monday for the Presidents' Day holiday and the thin trading volumes had the potential to amplify price fluctuations.

In London, Brent crude for April delivery gained \$2.37 to \$104.89 a barrel on the ICE Futures exchange.

The spread between the Nymex and Brent contracts has narrowed slightly but still remains far above usual levels of a few dollars per barrel. Brent is considered to be more sensitive to possible disruptions of Middle East oil supplies, while large U.S. stockpiles of crude are one of the reasons for the lower Nymex quotes.

On Sunday, Seif al-Islam



Brian Sprague fills his car's tank with gas in Philadelphia, Wednesday, Feb. 16, 2011. Gasoline pump prices reached a 28-month high Wednesday even though oil and gas supplies in the U.S. continue to grow and demand for gas is weak.

Associated Press

Gadhafi, son of Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi, warned protesters that they risked igniting a civil war in which Libya's oil wealth "will be burned."

While Libya is among the one of the world's biggest oil producers and has the largest proven oil reserves in the whole of Africa. It produces around 1.6 million barrels of crude a day and exports 1.1 million barrels.

Oil companies like U.K.-based BP and Germany's Wintershall said they were temporarily suspending operations in Libya, while Italy's Eni said production continued normally. Some of the firms also

began evacuating their foreign employees there.

"Compared to Tunisia (a minor crude exporter) or Egypt (not an exporter but a transit country), instability in Libya is a major concern to the oil industry," said analysts at JBC Energy in Vienna. Earlier Sunday, anti-government demonstrations spread to the Libyan capital of Tripoli and protesters seized military bases and weapons. In the eastern city of Benghazi, about 60 people were killed, while more than 200 have died since the unrest began seven days ago.

Oil traders are also closely

watching recent protests in Iran, which is the second-largest crude exporter in the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries behind Saudi Arabia.

"The concerns in the market go beyond Libya," said Victor Shum, an energy analyst with Purvin & Gertz in Singapore. "It's unlikely we're going to see any meaningful disruption of oil from the Middle East or North Africa, but the spread of this unrest has raised anxieties."

Experts also mentioned the possible spread of the political upheaval to Saudi Arabia as a possible threat to oil supplies and a bullish factor for oil prices. The kingdom which sits atop the world's largest proven reserves of conventional crude oil. □

"The 'elephant in the room' that has the potential to really ignite the markets is Saudi Arabia," said senior commodity analyst Edward Meir at MF Global in New York. "We have to suspect that the government is watching the situation in Bahrain with some trepidation, as the Saudi leadership mirrors the Bahraini one in that most of its governing class are Sunnis, while the governed are Shiites."

The Shiite minority is primarily located in Saudi Arabia's eastern province, where the bulk of its oil is located.

Bahrain, where protesters are calling for the ouster of the ruling monarchy, on Monday suspended its Grand Prix, the first race of the Formula One season and the country's biggest international event.

In other Nymex trading in March contracts, heating oil rose 6.6 cents to \$2.7789 a gallon and gasoline gained 5.87 cents to \$2.61 a gallon. Natural gas futures advanced 5.6 cent to \$3.932 per 1,000 cubic feet. □

Moody's downgrades Japan rating outlook on debt



In this Jan. 16, 2009, file photo Mount Fuji, Japan's highest peak at 31,238 ft., looms over high-rise buildings of Tokyo's Shinjuku district.

Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — Moody's Investors Service on Tuesday downgraded its outlook for Japan's credit rating because of concerns over its massive national debt.

The rating agency changed its outlook for Japan's Aa2 rating from stable to negative. In January, Standard & Poor's

cut Japan's credit rating from AA to AA- for the first time in almost nine years due to concerns over ballooning debt.

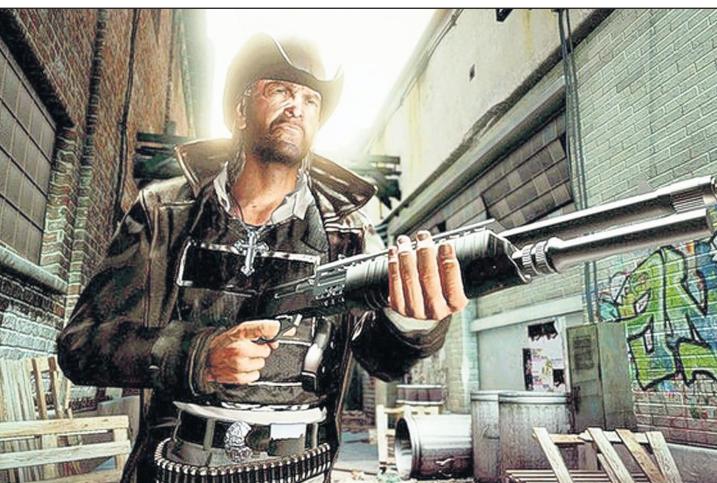
Moody's said the downgrade was due to "increasing uncertainty" over Japan's ability to implement effective measures to rein in rising debt.

Japan's debt ratio is already among the highest in the developed world.

The finance ministry estimated in January that the country's public debt would swell to 997.7 trillion yen (\$12 trillion) by March 2012, up from 943 trillion yen this year. □

In Mexico

Congress asks ban of video game



CIUDAD JUAREZ, Mexico — A shoot-em-up video game set in the border town of Ciudad Juarez has angered local officials who are busy fighting all-too-real violence. Chihuahua state legislators said Sunday they have asked federal authorities to ban the game, "Call of Juarez: The Cartel," which is based on drug cartel shootouts in Ciudad Juarez.

About 6,000 people died in drug-related violence in Ciudad Juarez in 2009 and 2010, making the city, located across from El Paso, Texas, one of the deadliest in the world.

The web site of game developer Ubisoft Entertainment SA says the title is due for release this summer. Screen shots from the game show three characters armed with a pistol, an assault rifle and a shotgun ready to open fire on a city street.

The game's promotional slogan urges players, "Take justice into your own hands and experience the lawlessness of the modern Wild West." No one answered a message left at the company's San Francisco

office.

Ricardo Boone Salmon, a congressman for Chihuahua state, where Ciudad Juarez is located, said the state legislature unanimously approved a request this week asking the federal Interior Department to ban the game. "It is true there is a serious crime situation, which we are not trying to hide," Boone Salmon said. "But we also should not expose children to this kind of scenarios so that they are going to grow up with this kind of image and lack of values."

State congress leader Enrique Serrano said the main concern was the potential effect on children in Ciudad Juarez, some of whom have already been taught to "duck and

Renren owner eyes \$500 million from U.S. IPO



NEW YORK — One of China's largest social networking companies, Oak Pacific Interactive, plans to raise about \$500 million this year in a U.S. initial public offering, Bloomberg reported on Sunday.

Reuters reported in December that Oak Pacific, owner of social networking site Renren, had hired Credit Suisse Group AG and Deutsche Bank AG to underwrite an IPO, planned for

the first half of this year. At the time, the amount to be raised had not been finalized.

Bloomberg, citing three people with knowledge of the plan, said the company was preparing an IPO of about \$500 million and that Morgan Stanley had also been hired.

Morgan Stanley and Oak Pacific could not immediately be reached for comment. □

Tickets, coupons among uses for tap-to-pay phones

By PETER SVENSSON

AP Technology Writer

BARCELONA, Spain — Cell phones are usually used to communicate with people far away. This year, they'll get the ability to do the opposite: communicate with things that are close enough to touch. It may not sound immediately useful, but phones will get some surprising capabilities with the addition of chips for so-called Near Field Communications, a wireless technology with a range intentionally limited to just a few inches.

The phones will be able

to talk to payment terminals designed for "smart cards," replacing credit and debit cards. They could be used as mass transit passes. You could tap two phones together to exchange contact information. Or you could tap a "smart tag" on a poster, product or sticker to get your phone to do something, such as retrieving information from the Internet or placing a call to the product's customer support line. Yankee Group analyst Nick Holland likens these tags to the links that take us from Web page to Web page, only now they're in the real world. Adding NFC is like adding a whole new capability on the level of GPS navigation or a camera, Holland said. The industry has been talking about including NFC in phones for years, mainly to turn them into "electronic wallets." Beyond a few trials, nothing much has happened, except in Japan and

Hong Kong, where these systems have caught on for mass-transit ticketing. But at the world's largest cell-phone trade show, held last week in Barcelona, Spain, it was clear that the log-jam has loosened, in part because NFC chips are now cheaper. Millions of NFC-equipped phones will be in consumer hands in the U.S. and Europe before the end of the year. Jim Balsillie, the co-CEO of BlackBerry maker Research In Motion Ltd., said at the show that "many if not most" BlackBerrys will have NFC chips this year. Google Inc.'s Nexus S already has one, and the company's latest Android software for that and other phones has NFC support. Nokia Corp., the world's largest maker of phones, has committed to putting NFC chips in all its next-generation smart phones. Based on job postings at Apple Inc., there's speculation the new iPhone model due this summer will have an NFC chip. □



A mobile phone is displayed with Visa payment platform at the Mobile World Congress in Barcelona, Spain, Thursday, Feb. 17, 2011. Phones that can be used to pay for things, much like credit cards or gas-station key fobs, have been a dream of the wireless industry for years. This year, it looks set to become a dream a reality as both phone makers and wireless carriers get on board. The Mobile World Congress is held from Feb. 14-17.

Associated Press



NASA to launch newest Earth-observation satellite

ALICIA CHANG,
Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — NASA is set to launch its latest Earth-orbiting satellite on a \$424 million mission to analyze airborne grit spewed by volcanoes, forest fires, smokestacks and tailpipes. The Glory satellite is slated to blast off before dawn Wednesday from Vandenberg Air Force Base aboard a Taurus XL rocket. Once boosted to an altitude of 440 miles, it will join a fleet of satellites that has been collecting climate data for years. Its main job will be to study fine airborne particles known as aerosols. Smaller than the diameter of a human hair, these ubiquitous specks can track great distances across the globe and are largely responsible for producing hazy skies. Scientists know very little about aerosols and their effect on climate. A better understanding is critical to improving climate models. "We need to know these particles much better than we do," said project scientist Michael Mishchenko of the NASA Goddard Institute for Space Studies. Over the past century, average temperatures have climbed 1.4 degrees Fahrenheit (less than 1 degree Celsius) worldwide. Scientists blame carbon dioxide, mostly from the burning of coal, oil and other fossil fuels, as the chief cause of global warming. Unlike greenhouse gases that linger in the atmosphere for years, aerosols are short-lived — staying aloft for weeks — so it's much harder to measure them than carbon dioxide. Most of the aerosols — roughly 90 percent — comes from natural sources such as volcanic ash, desert dust and smoke from forest fires. □



In this Oct. 27, 2010 file photo, an employee drives a Google vehicle around Palo Alto, Calif., streets to shoot "Street Views".

Associated Press

Google Street View raises Israeli security fears

JOSH LEDERMAN

Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Google has for years fought claims its mapping and photography services infringed on personal privacy. Now the Internet giant is facing concerns from Israel that the technology could be used for terrorism. Israel announced Monday it is considering ways for Google Street View to photograph Israeli cities, despite concerns the popular service could be used by terrorists to plot attacks against sensitive locations or political figures.

A team of Israeli Cabinet ministers led by Intelligence Minister Dan Meridor instructed experts Monday to work with Google Inc. to

find a safe way to implement the feature "as soon as possible," according to an official statement. The team is weighing benefits, such as increased visibility for tourist sites, with public safety and personal privacy.

Street View allows users to virtually tour locations on a map. It is already available in 27 countries. Google uses special vehicles with panoramic cameras to take ground-level, 3-D images.

The feature has sparked intense debate about invasions of privacy in the U.S., Germany and other countries.

Critics argue the images could reveal people in places they don't want to be seen or doing things that might be embarrassing. □

NBA All-Star game Rihanna rocks celeb-studded game

LOS ANGELES – With a celebrity-studded crowd looking on, Rihanna rocked the halftime show at the NBA All-Star game on her 23rd birthday.

She had other big names helping her sing her hits Sunday, with Drake joining in on "What's My Name?" and working "happy birthday" into the lyrics.

Dripping in gold chains, a red-clad Kanye West came out for "All of the Lights," which is off his latest album but features Rihanna.

At halftime, the lights inside Staples Center went out and the video screens filled with water droplets, setting the stage for Rihanna to emerge from behind a wall singing "Umbrella."

The red-haired singer soon shed her short black suit jacket and white scarf to reveal a short black skirt and a rhinestone halter. She shimmied her way through "Only Girl (In the World)" and didn't flinch when her huge hoop earring fell off her left ear in mid-song.

While it was a working day for Rihanna, her fellow music stars relaxed in their



seats while watching the 60th annual All-Star game. The West team, led by Kobe Bryant's 37 points, defeated the East 148-143.

Beyoncé and hubby Jay-Z sat courtside, with Justin Bieber (MVP of Friday's All-Star celebrity game) two seats away. Sean "Diddy" Combs, Stevie Wonder (wearing headphones), Grammy winner Bruno Mars, Keri Hilson, Ne-Yo, Gene Simmons, and "American Idol" judge Steven Tyler were scattered around the arena. Rapper Nicki Minaj snacked on pink cotton candy. Later, Rihanna sat courtside next to 16-year-old Bieber, making for a striking contrast between her flaming long hair and his famous shaggy 'do. □

Music exec slams Grammy with full-page NY Times ad

NEW YORK – A veteran music executive has lambasted the Grammy Awards as "a series of hypocrisies and contradictions," in a full-page New York Times advertisement that ran a week after last Sunday's annual ceremony.

Steve Stoute's open letter to Grammy organizers ripped the organization and its 12,000-odd voters for snubbing Eminem and Justin Bieber at this year's ceremony, as well as Eminem and Kanye West at past events.

"Over the course of my 20-year history as an executive in the music business and as the owner of a firm that specializes in in-culture advertising, I have come to the conclusion that the Grammy Awards have clearly lost touch with contemporary popular culture," wrote Stoute, who is currently CEO of the marketing company Translation.

"Unfortunately, the awards show has become a series of hypocrisies and contradictions, leaving me to question why any contemporary popular artist would even participate."

Eminem, this year's leading contender, lost in most of the major categories for which he was nominated. Two-time nominee Bieber went home empty-handed and disappointed. Both West and Eminem have lost the coveted album of the year race multiple times.

"We must acknowledge the massive cultural impact of Eminem and Kanye West and how their music is shaping, influencing and defining the voice of a generation," Stoute wrote. □

Hollywood rarely crowns British realm at Oscars

LOS ANGELES – It may seem as though Academy Awards voters would be a bunch of fawning monarchists, considering how often the ceremony has been a love fest for all things English. But British kings and queens generally wind up losers at the Oscars.

If "The King's Speech," a saga about Queen Elizabeth II's dad, makes good on its status as best-picture favorite on Sunday, it would become the first film with a British monarch as its central figure to win the top prize in the 83-year history of the Oscars. Two films with a British king or queen as a supporting player 1966's "A Man for All Seasons" and 1998's "Shakespeare in Love" did win best picture. Yet past contenders with a monarch in



a lead role have always lost: 1933's "The Private Life of Henry VIII," 1946's "Henry V," 1964's "Becket," 1968's "The Lion in Winter," 1969's "Anne of the Thousand Days," 1998's "Elizabeth" (which lost to "Shakespeare in Love") and 2006's "The Queen." Actors as British monarchs have fared a bit better, with

lead-acting wins by Charles Laughton in the title role of "The Private Life of Henry VIII"; Katharine Hepburn as Henry II's captive queen, Eleanor of Aquitaine, in "The Lion in Winter"; and Helen Mirren as Elizabeth II in "The Queen." Judi Dench won a supporting Oscar as Elizabeth I in "Shakespeare in Love." □

Take a seat on Kate Middleton's life



LONDON – The seats were mostly taken by the press and the only "tourists" were a few interested locals, but the bus tour around the hometown of British Prince William's fiancée Kate Middleton kicked off over the weekend. The ride organized by bus tour operator Morton Travel around the sights of Royal Berkshire provides a glimpse of Middleton's not-so-ordinary upbringing.

The journey takes in Middleton's childhood homes, former schools, the church where she was baptized, and even the "The Old Boot Inn" where she has taken Prince William for a tipple.

The Middletons are regulars at "The Old Boot Inn" pub and landlord John Hayley is one of the lucky few to have been invited to the royal couple's April 29th wedding and happily showed his invitation to those on the Sunday tour

when the bus made the first of many planned stops along the route. Bus tour company owner Adrian Morton told Reuters outside the pub that the original plan was to create a local tour for regular customers, but discovered there was interest in it from around the globe. "We wanted to do something for our local clientele, just as something to do in the early part of our year as an excursion," Morton said. "It was then picked up by people in the press and it sort of snowballed from there really."

He said he has had a number of enquiries from the United States, Canada, Japan, as well as Sweden and Germany.

As the tourists and the press pack settled back on the bus following a refreshment stop, Hilda Hewletts, from Basingstoke, who was on the sightseeing trip with husband Terence, was one of

the few passengers willing to speak freely to the press and explained why they had turned out for the tour.

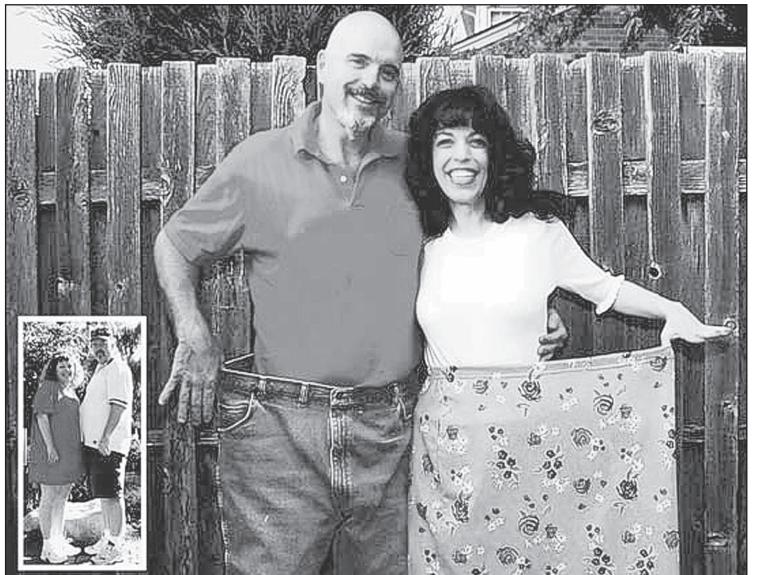
"To find out more about Kate Middleton, where she lived and what she did," Hilda Hewletts said. Kate Middleton will marry William on April 29th in London's Westminster Abbey, in a ceremony that will be watched live on television by millions around the world. Public interest in a royal couple has not been seen on such a scale since William's parents Prince Charles and the late Princess Diana wed in 1981. News that Britain's royal wedding invites are in the post has touched off lively press speculation, with former England soccer captain David Beckham and the King of Bahrain tipped to be attending but not U.S. President Barack Obama or William's aunt, Sarah Ferguson.

The 29-year-old Middleton is the eldest child of Michael and Carole Middleton, who became millionaires running Party Pieces, a mail order firm supplying party accessories. The epitome of Middle England, they live in a five-bedroom house in the heart of the countryside in the county of Berkshire, west of London. □



Study Finds

Gastric Bypass Best for Weight Loss



When it comes to shedding pounds and improving or eliminating type 2 diabetes, gastric bypass surgery may be better than other surgical weight-loss procedures, two new studies find.

But obese patients should be

careful to choose surgeons who have performed a high volume of these procedures before committing, said Dr. Guilherme M. Campos, lead author of one of two papers appearing in the February issue of the Archives of

Surgery.

Gastric bypass and lap-band are the two most common surgical weight-loss procedures performed in the United States.

The former involves stapling the stomach so food has to bypass a section of the small intestine, meaning you get full faster and less food gets absorbed into the gut.

Lap-band, introduced in 2001, involves separating the stomach into two sections with a band so, simply speaking, eating too much becomes more difficult. "It's a diet with a seatbelt," said Dr. Mitchell Roslin, chief of bariatric surgery at Lenox Hill Hospital in New York City and Northern Westchester Hospital in Mt. Kisco, N.Y.

In a third type of weight-loss

procedure, known as sleeve gastrectomy, surgeons remove part of the stomach. □

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Surviving Melanoma Different on Women, Men



Women who beat a melanoma were also more likely than their male counterparts to go on to protect themselves and their families from harmful UV radiation, the study found. "Men might be less aware of general measures of sun protection and need education about these measures after treatment," the authors noted. The study is published in the February issue of the Archives of Dermatology. According to the U.S. National Institutes of Health, melanoma is the most lethal of all skin cancers. However, the disease is curable if caught early enough, before it has spread to the lymph nodes and other tissues and organs. According to the study authors, that means that 80 percent of melanoma patients face a "relatively good" prognosis. □

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Scientist finds Gulf of Mexico bottom still oily, dead

SETH BORENSTEIN

AP Science Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Oil from the BP spill remains stuck on the bottom of the Gulf of Mexico, according to a top scientist's video and slides that she says demonstrate the oil isn't degrading as hoped and has decimated life on parts of the sea floor.

That report is at odds with a recent report by the BP spill compensation czar that said nearly all will be well by 2012. At a science conference in Washington on Saturday, marine scientist Samantha Joye of the University of Georgia aired early results of her December submarine dives around the BP spill site. She went to places she had visited in the summer and expected the oil and residue from oil-munching microbes thought that "most of the oil is gone." And a Department of Energy scientist, doing research with a grant from BP from before the spill, said his examination of oil plumes in the water column show that microbes have done a "fairly fast" job of eating the oil. Lawrence Berkeley National Lab scientist Terry Hazen said his research differs from Joye's because they looked at different places at different times.

Joye's research was more

would be gone by then. It wasn't.

"There's some sort of a bottleneck we have yet to identify for why this stuff doesn't seem to be degrading," Joye told the American Association for the Advancement of Science annual conference in Washington. Her research and those of her colleagues contrasts with other studies that show a more optimistic outlook about the health of the gulf, saying microbes did great work munching the oil.

"Magic microbes consumed maybe 10 percent of the total discharge, the rest of it we don't know," Joye said, later adding: "there's a lot of it out there."

The head of the agency in charge of the health of the Gulf said Saturday that she widespread, but has been slower in being published in scientific literature.

In five different expeditions, the last one in December, Joye and colleagues took 250 cores of the sea floor and travelled across 2,600 square miles. Some of the locations she had been studying before the oil spill on April 20 and said there was a noticeable change. Much of the oil she found on the sea floor — and in the water column — was chemically fingerprinted,



This Dec. 1, 2010 photo provided by the University of Georgia, made from the submarine Alvin, shows a dead crab with oil residue near it on a still-damaged sea floor about 10 miles north of the BP oil rig accident. Marine biologist Samantha Joye of the University of Georgia said, "We consistently saw dead fauna (animals) at all these sites. It's likely there's a fairly large area impacted," she said.

Associated Press

proving it comes from the BP spill. Joye is still waiting for results to show other oil samples she tested are from BP's Macondo well.

She also showed pictures of oil-choked bottom-dwelling creatures. They included dead crabs and brittle stars — starfish like critters that are normally bright orange and tightly wrapped around coral. These brittle stars were pale, loose and dead. She also saw tube worms so full of oil they suffocated.

"This is Macondo oil on the bottom," Joye said as she showed slides. "This is dead organisms because of oil being deposited on their heads."

Joye said her research shows that the burning of oil left soot on the sea floor, which still had petroleum products. And even more troublesome was the tremendous amount of methane from the BP well that mixed into the Gulf and was mostly ignored by other researchers.

Joye and three colleagues last

week published a study in Nature Geoscience that said the amount of gas injected into the Gulf was the equivalent of between 1.5 and 3 million barrels of oil.

"The gas is an important part of understanding what happened," said Ian MacDonald of Florida State University.

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration chief Jane Lubchenco told reporters Saturday that "it's not a contradiction to say that although most of the oil is gone, there still remains oil out there."

Earlier this month, Kenneth Feinberg, the government's oil compensation fund czar, said based on research he commissioned he figured the Gulf of Mexico would almost fully recover by 2012 — something Joye and Lubchenco said isn't right.

"I've been to the bottom. I've seen what it looks like with my own eyes. □

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Huelga de hambre de jóvenes crece en Venezuela

CARACAS (AP) - Una huelga de hambre de jóvenes parece estar ganando impulso en la medida de que sus organizadores logran llamar la atención internacional, pero analistas afirmaron el lunes que no creen que el presidente Hugo Chávez atienda las demandas de los activistas de una investigación internacional sobre presuntas violaciones de los derechos humanos.

El dirigente juvenil Julio César Rivas dijo en una conversación telefónica, que más de 80 personas están participando en la huelga de hambre que se está realizando frente a las oficinas de la OEA en Caracas, las embajadas de Chile y Costa Rica en la capital, y otros ocho estados del país. La protesta comenzó el 31 de enero con 13 jóvenes.

Ninguna fuente independiente ha corroborado la cifra de huelguistas, que aseguran que solamente beben agua y solución salina. Piden que la Organización de Estados Americanos (OEA) evalúe el estado de los derechos humanos en el país sudamericano, y los casos de



Un grupo de estudiantes duermen durante una huelga de hambre al frente a las oficinas de la OEA en Caracas. Los jóvenes activistas demanda una investigación internacional sobre presuntas violaciones de los derechos humanos en Venezuela.

(AP Photo/Ariana Cubillos)

los "presos políticos". La medida de presión ha provocado que algunos aliados de Chávez salgan en defensa del gobierno después que el secretario general de la OEA, José Miguel Insulza, dijo estar dispuesto a visitar Venezuela para atender así una de las peticiones de los

huelguistas. Chávez, sin embargo, no ha mostrado señales de ceder.

"Parece que el gobierno no se mueve", dijo el profesor Gilbert Merkx, director de estudios internacionales en la Universidad de Duke. Merkx señaló que el ministro de Relaciones Interiores, Tareck El Aissami, se ha reunido con los estudiantes, lo cual "sugiere que Chávez podría

estar preocupado por la protesta o sus consecuencias". Sin embargo, "el gobierno de Chávez está endurecimiento sus respuestas a los desafíos y hace concesiones tácticas de menor importancia", dijo Merkx.

Michael Shifter, presidente de la organización Diálogo Interamericano, dijo que cree que el gobierno "va a resistir". "No está en el estado de ánimo

de ellos (el gobierno) el darle cabida a las demandas de los estudiantes", expresó Shifter. "Si crece, puede que tengan que ceder un poco".

En una declaración conjunta los integrantes de la Alianza Bolivariana para las Américas (ALBA) exigieron la semana pasada a Insulza "cesar sus ataques" y dejar de interferir en los asuntos internos de Venezuela.

El bloque regional, que conforman Venezuela, Cuba, Bolivia, Nicaragua, Ecuador, Dominica, Antigua y Barbuda, y San Vicente y las Granadinas, exhortó a los demás países miembros de la organización a "reaccionar ante lo que constituye un retroceso peligroso a los tiempos en que la OEA fue instrumento del intervencionismo y el colonialismo".

El gobierno estadounidense solicitó la semana pasada a Chávez que autorice la visita de Insulza. Steve Ellner, profesor de ciencias políticas de la Universidad de Oriente en Venezuela, dijo que Insulza puede ser renuente a presionar porque el "podría ser acusado de estar partidizado si él toma una posición firme a favor de los estudiantes venezolanos". □

Ex presidente Fujimori sometido a nueva cirugía

LIMA (AP) - El ex presidente Alberto Fujimori fue sometido el lunes a una nueva cirugía para extirparle una lesión pre cancerosa que había reaparecido en su lengua, informaron su hija y su médico de cabecera.

Esta es la cuarta operación que se practica a Fujimori desde que le fuera detectada una "leucoplasia", o lesión pre cancerosa en la lengua en la década del 90 y la tercera a la que es sometido en los últimos años estando en prisión.

"Le han retirado tres centímetros por dos centímetros de su lengua. Según los doctores, está fuera de peligro", aseveró Keiko Fujimori, su hija mayor, actual candidata presidencial. "Tenemos la tranquilidad y confianza de que va a estar bien", agregó en declaraciones a la emisora radial Radioprogramas. El médico de cabecera de Fujimori, Alejandro Aguinaga, comentó que el ex presidente es un paciente de riesgo, dada su avanzada edad, 72 años, y por ser la cuarta vez que es operado en la zona bucal. Fujimori se encontraba en sala de recuperación.

En 2008 los médicos que operaron al ex presidente para retirarle otra leucoplasia en la lengua dijeron que la lesión resultó ser maligna. Aguinaga dijo que Fujimori permanecerá internado hasta el jueves, cuando se conocerán los resultados de la biopsia, y luego retornará a la sede de la Dirección de Operaciones Especiales de la Policía Nacional, en donde purga una condena de 25 años por violaciones a los derechos humanos. □

ONU elogia regreso de Aristegui a radio en México

MEXICO (AP) - El relator especial sobre libertad de expresión de la ONU, Frank La Rue, celebró el lunes el retorno de la periodista Carmen Aristegui a su programa en MVS radio, del que salió por dos semanas tras ser despedida por supuestas violaciones al código de ética de la empresa.

El relator de la ONU señaló en un comunicado que el retorno a su espacio matutino de MVS Radio "es una oportunidad propicia para que se sigan impulsando las transformaciones estructurales que requiere el Estado mexicano en favor de

la diversidad y el pluralismo de conformidad con los estándares internacionales en materia de libertad de expresión".

MVS anunció el 7 de febrero que había despedido a la periodista por haber "transgredido" el código ético del medio al dar "por válida

una presunción" y negarse a ofrecer una disculpa pública como se lo solicitó la propia compañía. La empresa no informó el motivo específico, aunque Aristegui dijo que su salida se debió a presiones del gobierno federal luego de haber abordado al aire rumores de un posible alcoholismo del

presidente Felipe Calderón. MVS informó la semana pasada que se había acordado con la periodista el retorno al espacio noticioso, luego de evaluar expresiones públicas sobre el programa y su experiencia en más de dos años de colaboración en la empresa.

Aristegui es considerada en México como una de las periodistas con mayor credibilidad y su despido desató un debate sobre la libertad de expresión en el país y presuntas presiones del poder. El gobierno rechazó en todo momento haber realizado cualquier presión. □

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